

A STUDY
OF
THE LITERATURE OF POLITICAL PERSUASION
IN
NORTH VIETNAM
(~~1944 - 1954~~)

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is restricted to a study of political persuasion on the part of the Vietnamese Communists. It is further limited to a period of some ten years, from the political debut of the Viet Minh (1944-45) until their victory at Dien Bien Phu and triumphal return to Hanoi, towards the end of 1954.

The aim of the research is to evaluate the elements essential to the success of Communist persuasion in North Viet Nam.

To achieve this, it is necessary briefly to review the perennial struggle of the Vietnamese nation, which Communist agit-prop successfully exploited. Another background chapter describes the socio-political context of the early 1940's when the Viet Minh prepared their public appearance.

Then, political persuasion is studied through Communist documents and publications, especially the numerous addresses and messages of Ho Chi Minh. These are related to the principal campaigns organised by the Communists in order to attract, inspire, and motivate the Vietnamese people to co-operate with them: the National Salvation organisations and the theme of Independence and Freedom; the Alliance policy and the theme of National Unity; the consolidation of national power amidst conflicts and the theme of conciliation for future advance; the nation-wide war and the theme of certain victory; and the complex programme of national resistance and nation-building with the theme

of "Peace and Democracy".

The final chapter attempts to identify the principal elements which made possible the Viet Minh's success in persuading and mobilising the people to implement their political plans which finally led to the establishment of a socialist-communist regime.

This study contributes a more comprehensive presentation of the Vietnamese literature of Communist persuasion than was previously available. It offers a tentative analysis of the method and techniques successfully applied by the Vietnamese Communists to the preparation, dissemination, and exploitation of the persuasive message in the achievement of their political aims.

It is suggested that further researches and similar analysis concerning the post-Geneva period (from 1955-56 to 1973), which coincides with the American involvement in Viet Nam, will produce rewarding results and provide a highly interesting comparative study.

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INTRODUCTION

Though not directly involved in the Second World War, Viet Nam was an area of dispute between the French and the Japanese. Consequently, the outcome of the War deeply affected the people of that tiny country.

Together with the complex international events of the early 1940's, the French defeat in March 1945 and the Japanese surrender in August of the same year precipitated the final collapse of the old order: eighty years of French colonial rule came to an end and the Nguyen dynasty which had lasted nearly 250 years, was removed. A new chapter opened in the history of the nation with the public appearance of the Viet Minh and the birth of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

In fact, the situation which the Viet Minh encountered in 1945, was confused, riddled with conflicts, and fraught with seemingly insuperable difficulties. International observers and Vietnamese nationalist leaders were pessimistic to the point of agreeing with some prophets of doom that the Viet Minh days were numbered.

However, the Viet Minh survived. The Provisional Government of Ho Chi Minh became official and permanent. When the French forces returned, militarily well equipped, to insist on a modus vivendi, the almost empty handed Viet Minh left Hanoi for the jungle to wage a protracted war of resistance.

Eight years later, the Viet Minh surprised the whole world with their historic victory at Dien Bien Phu. After signing the Geneva Accords in July 1954, the same Government of Ho Chi Minh triumphantly re-occupied Hanoi to install a Communist regime in the Northern half of Viet Nam.

This remarkable achievement deserves close study, in particular the element on which the whole Viet Minh success was founded, namely political persuasion.

Before examining the Viet Minh literature of persuasion, it is necessary, briefly, to review the history of the Vietnamese people, which records their persistent struggle through the centuries and offers an inspirational source of persuasion (Chapter I). Next, a brief account of the Indochinese Communist Party is presented against the background of Vietnamese society in the early 1940's (Chapter II).

Then, the Communist work of persuasion is studied through the plans, directives, appeals, publications, and other forms of agit-prop of the Viet Minh Government and Party, from the early 1940's to 1954. Since Ho Chi Minh was the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party, prime mover of the Viet Minh organisation, father of the Democratic Republic, and president of the Government, his appeals are cited as principal sources and are corroborated by quotations from other "comrade leaders", such as Truong-Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap.

In general, chronological order is followed because it is useful in unfolding the gradual implementation of

Communist plans. Nevertheless, the study concentrates on the principal campaigns and their themes which proved irresistible as they reflected the aspirations of the people, and represent, at the same time, the successive milestones in the "minimum programme" of the Viet Minh towards socialism.

Thus, the noble ideal of Independence and Freedom attracted the Vietnamese to the Cuu Quoc (Saving the Country) organisations of the Viet Minh Front (Chapter III), while the theme of National Unity persuaded other political parties and different social, political, and religious elements, to ally themselves with the undeclared Communists within a national united front such as the Lien Viet (Chapter IV). If conflicting forces prevented the progressive implementation of Communist plans, the Viet Minh leaders proved flexible enough to practice conciliation, conduct negotiation, and sign compromise agreements, with a view to disarming their opponents, and gaining time for future advance (Chapter V).

When the French Government decided to use superior military power to enforce a modus vivendi, the Viet Minh appealed to patriotic sentiments, invoked the tradition of persistent struggle, and cited the "indomitable spirit" of the most respected national heroes to thrust the people into the battlefield with the deep conviction of final success (Chapter VI).

Chapter VII presents the complex programme during the Resistance War, which demanded of the entire nation

total sacrifice for complete victory, and at the same time, urged enthusiastic co-operation in the great task of nation-building. Every Vietnamese was strongly motivated to concentrate all his efforts on achieving Peace and Democracy only to find later, after paying a high price for the patriotic war, a "peaceful" installation of "People's Democracy", i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat which brooked no opposition. In a sense, this exploitation of ambiguity summarises the Communist success in Viet Nam, and points to the adroit way by which the Viet Minh reached their goals.

Chapter VIII, the last one, attempts a short analysis of the surprising success of the Communist Viet Minh in North Viet Nam, by describing the magnetic personality of Ho Chi Minh and briefly explaining the five-point methodical approach and the ten principal techniques employed in Communist persuasion.

Chapter I

VIET-NAM: an indomitable nation

Though the Republic of Viet-Nam is very young, the Vietnamese nation is ancient, with an often turbulent recorded history extending back over two millenia.

While the earliest periods remain shrouded in myths and legends, it is generally accepted by ethnographers that the Vietnamese people, if their ancestry is traced back to the stone age, are products of an admixture of the Austronesians, the Mongoloid-Thais and Yueh of South China. This heterogeneous make-up may still be discerned in the complex population of Viet-Nam today.

From its first emergence as a tiny independent state ¹ it had to face, not only periodic calamities of drought and flood, but the constant threat of invasion from its powerful neighbour, the "Celestial Empire" of China. Indeed, the early history of Viet-Nam records little else but a continuous struggle with "the North". One consequence of so great a power imbalance between two neighbours was that Viet-Nam underwent a long Chinese domination that lasted from 111 B.C. to 938 A.D. Thus this tiny state near the Southern border was reduced to a Chinese "Chou" (i.e., district) and named, somewhat contemptuously, "the Pacified South" (AN-NAM).

The Vietnamese spirit, however, was subdued but never truly pacified. Despite the fact that Chinese administrators contributed so greatly to the developing Vietnamese culture and civilization, it required no more

than abuse of power from some of their number to induce the indigenous people to take up arms and engage in bitter conflict against their rulers.² But insurrections of this nature were always quickly put down by the overwhelming might of imperial forces from the North. Only towards the middle of the tenth century, when they were enabled to exploit China's serious domestic political difficulties, did the Viets successfully terminate the ten-century domination by force of arms. Concerning the emergence of Viet-Nam as an autonomous kingdom practically independent of the huge Empire of China, a recent historian has commented: "The very existence of Viet-Nam as a separate country, and the survival of the Vietnamese as a distinct people, must be regarded as a miracle, for which scores of historians have so far tried vainly to find a satisfactory explanation."³

Whatever the reasons, the conservation of national identity of the Vietnamese people was ultimately rewarded with nine hundred years of independence and separate development. But even after she had established national sovereignty, Viet-Nam still had to struggle for survival and national government until the emergence of two great dynasties, the Ly (1010-1225) and the Tran (1225-1400). During that period, Viet-Nam enjoyed a large measure of national security and achieved considerable progress in the spheres of economics, government and culture. To the indigenous traditions and Buddhist heritage, was added the Confucianist system of political and social organization. National unity was personified in the supreme

power of the king, whose power extended downwards (through the nine degrees of civil and military mandarin hierarchy), to the lowest social and administrative unit, the village. Universal military service, a national system of tax collection, relief funds, the development of irrigation and agriculture; these were the outstanding hallmarks of this period of growth. But growth was not the only feature of "the era of independence and great dynasties" as it is usually called. Those dynasties, long or short-lived, like any other human institution, inevitably suffered at one time or another, from the poisons of human ambitions, political plotting and power corruption. It was the dispute over the royal throne between the Tan and the Ho dynasties that made possible a second Chinese intervention and a fourth period of Chinese domination from 1407 to 1427, in which great suffering and hardship afflicted the Vietnamese.

The Ming occupation appeared to have two principal objectives, the maximum economic exploitation of Vietnamese resources and the replacement of Vietnamese culture, which had developed during the centuries of independence, by that of China. Wood mineral products, extracted by enforced Vietnamese labour, were transported to China. Cults and rites, dress and customs, language and writings, in fact, every indigenous feature, was replaced by a Chinese counterpart in a deliberate attempt to destroy Vietnamese separate national identity. The resulting deep sense of grievance, which developed among the Vietnamese, was later described in a typically oriental

fashion by the great writer Nguyen Trai: "All the bamboo of the Southern Mountains would not be sufficient to provide the paper for recording all their crimes".

It was just such fiery language of this statesman and writer that stirred up the hearts and rallied the hands of the Vietnamese around the national hero of the 15th century, Le Loi. After ten years of protracted guerilla warfare, this outstanding leader succeeded in expelling the Chinese to re-establish Viet-Nam's independence, rebuild national unity and found another great dynasty, the Later Le.

That long enduring dynasty (1428-1789) can boast of the efforts to execute an altruistic land reform and an austerity programme under Le Loi, of exceptional cultural achievements during the reign of Le Thanh Ton (1461-1497) such as the blossoming of Chu Nom literature, the compilation of the Hong Duc legal code, the social and political ethics inspired by neo-confucianism, the military reforms and the successful southward expansion. But decadence inevitably overtook this dynasty too, so that its later rulers became the instigators of base and often brutal political intrigues, of local revolts, palace coups and civil wars.

Twice was the country divided into two warring halves: once (1527-1592) by the Mac and the Le, and a second time (1620-1788) by the Trinh and the Nguyen. Both periods of partition were marked by bitter and bloody civil wars, each lasting for half a century.

Profiting from the unrest and instability occasioned by a developing political and economic crisis in South

Vietnam, the Tay Son Brothers ⁴ led a successful peasant revolt to grasp the power from the Nguyen. When the Trinh troops came to conquer the South, the Tay Son chased them back to the frontier of China thus taking over both the North and the South of Viet-Nam. The Le King, a figurehead in the North, appealed to China for help. Once again, Chinese troops came down as volunteers to help the dethroned Le King but were defeated by Nguyen Hue, one of the Tay Son brothers who had assumed the royal title of Quang Trung.

Having acceded to power in the wake of internal disorders, the Tay Son engaged in family discord and political malpractice, thereby generating fresh disorders. They were themselves overthrown in 1802 by Prince Nguyen Anh, who re-unified the country after nearly two centuries of partition. This prince was proclaimed Emperor and, with the reign title Gia Long, founded the later Nguyen dynasty that was to last nearly 150 years.

In his struggle to recapture that authority wielded by his ancestors and lost to the Tay Son, Gia Long had been obliged to accept military and technical assistance from a group of French men. Even after the successful conclusion of the war their expertise was still needed, but the new Emperor managed his dealings with these valuable, but politically troublesome, Westerners so skillfully that their relations remained harmonious. His immediate successors, Ming Mang and Tu Duc, men educated and trained in the strict Confucianist tradition, believed their throne to be seriously threatened by the "dangerous impact" of the industrialized West on Vietnam,

an influence they regarded as "barbarous" and "uncivilised". Their reaction to the threat was to adopt an attitude of arrogance and a policy of isolationism.

The behaviour of the royal court, together with the complex haughtiness of manner displayed by the out-dated mandarinates as they met the inflexibility of French authorities, increased the mutual misunderstanding and religious tension, building up towards violent confrontation and open hostility. Torn by internal crisis and being inferior in military equipment, Viet-Nam again lost her independence, to be dominated by the French for nearly a century.

From the day hostilities broke out and continually during the whole period of French rule, the Vietnamese people, brooding over their loss of national sovereignty, refused to let their resentment and opposition die. This incessant undercurrent of resistance was discernible in every possible form: popular songs, satiric writings, political essays, formal petitions, secret organisations, and so forth. Better known were the insurrections led by Emperor Ham Nghi, Phan Dinh Phung and the Literati, by De Tham⁵ and Tan Thuat⁶, the resistance movements headed by Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chau Trinh, Prince Cuong De

From the 1920s, many new organisations were set up with the aim of ending the French domination: the Constitutionalist Party of Cochinchina (1923), the Revolutionary Association for a new Viet-Nam (Tan Viet Cach Mang Dang, 1924), the Revolutionary Youth League (1925), the People's Party of Viet-Nam (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang,

1927), the Communist Party of Indochina (1930), to name only the important ones.

Even French writers ⁷ were moved to deplore the continuous political crisis in Viet-Nam. This crisis came to a head with the Yen Bai revolt ⁸ and the Nghe-Tinh Soviet. ⁹ Though these bloody encounters ended in complete military failure, they were unmistakable manifestations of a continuous resistance against French rulers.

It was, indeed, characteristic of the Vietnamese people that, as a result of long historical experience, they were obsessed by a phobia of foreign domination and exploitation. Sustained by the inspiring memory of so many heroic leaders, they were stubbornly determined to oppose by all means, the French rule over Viet-Nam. But, until the 1940's the formidable Secret Service and the overwhelming legionary forces had crushed all insurrections and choked to death all nationalist aspirations.

The Second World War, however, witnessed many drastic changes in apparently stable situations all over the world. The French administration in Indochina was gradually eclipsed by the rising power of Japan until the coup de grace of 9 March 1945 brought the French domination to an abrupt end.

Emperor Bao Dai introduced the Tran Trong Kim Cabinet with several young ministers while ~~several~~ Vietnamese political banners made their appearance and

and various rumours were circulating... After a few months of frustration, the New Cabinet resigned when it became obvious that the Japanese had dislodged the French only to occupy their seat and did not want Viet-Nam to have its own army.

But only a week later, Japan was obliged to surrender to the Allied forces. Taking advantage of the opportunity this offered, the Communists quickly decided to march out under the banner of the Vietnam League for Independence and to take over the country before the arrival of allied forces. In the ensuing period the Viet Minh (Vietnamese League for Independence) succeeded in taking over the city of Hanoi, obtaining the resignation of Bao Dai, establishing a "coalition Government" under its own control and rallying the people for a protracted war of resistance, that led to the partition of Viet-Nam in the 1954 Geneva agreements.

After 25 years, it is still substantially the same group of Viet Minh leaders who are building socialism in the North and continuing the "liberation war" in the South. Among the various elements contributing to their success, persuasion, based on Vietnam's historic national consciousness, played a very important, even fundamental role.

While historians and ethnologists may still dispute about the genesis of the Vietnamese national identity, there exists no doubt that the Vietnamese people have acquired an extraordinarily strong national consciousness of which they have always been proud. For centuries, Confucianism, the officially recognised doctrine in political, social and educational fields, has inculcated in

the Vietnamese mind and heart a strong sense of tradition. In the most cherished heritage handed down from one generation to the next, was their tradition of heroic struggle and amazing success against such powerful enemies as China and Mongolia. The memory of their glorious victories, certainly offered a very effective element of persuasion that the Communist leaders, as will be shown later, never failed to exploit. But, before observing the persuasion at work, it will be very helpful to examine the concrete situation inside Viet-Nam, with its enormous difficulties, just before the Viet Minh made their debut.

Footnotes to chapter I

Introductory Background: Viet-Nam an indomitable nation

1. Throughout the centuries, this country has been known by several names: Van-Lang (5th century B.C. - 257 B.C.), An-Lac (257-207 B.C.), Nam-Viet (207-111 B.C.), Giao-Chi (111 B.C. - 203 A.D), Giao-Chau (203-544), Van-Xuan (544-603), An-Nam (603-939), Dai-Co-Viet (969-1054), Dai-Viet (1054-1400), Dai-Ngu (1400-1407), An-Nam (1407-1427), Dai-Viet (1428-1802), Viet-Nam (1802-1832), Dau-Nam (1832-1945), Viet-Nam (from 1945). Thus there have been at least twelve national names, most of them have the term Viet (Yueh in Chinese) which designates the leading ethnic group. For convenience, the present name, Viet-Nam, is being used throughout this study. Its inhabitants are called Vietnamese or Viets for short.
2. During the Chinese domination, there were many uprisings. Better known were the revolts led by the Trung Sisters (40-43), by Madam Trieu (248), by Ly-Bon (544), by Mai Thuc Loan (722), by Khuc Thua Du (905) and by Ngo Quyen who had won a famous victory on the Bach Dang river (939).
3. Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon. New York: F. Praeger, 1958, p.11.
4. They were Nhac, Lu and Hue, of a Ho family that had emigrated from Nghe-An to Tay-Son, a small village of the Binh-Dinh province. In order to overcome the people's sense of loyalty to the ruling dynasty in the South (the Nguyen), they assumed the family name Nguyen. They also "leaked out" the rumour that the Tay Son Brothers had received the mandate of Heaven on a high mountain.
5. His real name was Hoang Hoa Tham. This die-hard guerilla leader, nicknamed "The Tiger of Yen-The",

was harassing the French for some twenty years (1887-1913) in the Bac-Giang area.

6. Tan Thuat or Nguyen Tien Thuat led an insurrection in Hai-Duon until 1892, when he had to take refuge in China.
7. See for example Fernand Bernard, L'Indochine, erreurs et dangers: Un programme. Paris: Charpentier, 1901.
8. The revolt broke out on 10 February 1930, being led by the Nationalist Party.
9. Violent insurrections took place in many areas. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Indochina, "soviets" were set up in some areas of the provinces of Nghe-An and Ha-Tinh (1930-1931), but the whole movement was quickly drowned in blood.

Chapter II

The COMMUNIST PARTY and VIET-NAM in the early 1940's

At the beginning of the second World War, the situation in Viet-Nam was fraught with difficulties. The events of World War II, particularly those directly affecting French Indochina, further aggravated an already tense situation and precipitated a crisis in 1945, a year which proved to be a turning-point in the history of the nation.

Already, during the middle and late nineteen thirties, discouraged by both their advancing years and repeated failures, many of the former mandarins and old Confucianist scholars, who had comprised the nucleus of the nationalist movement since the beginning of French rule, quietly withdrew from the political scene. They then chose to express any resentment or opposition they still nurtured, by non-cooperation rather than violence, apparently seeking consolation in the tradition of Taoist contentment and Confucianist harmony.

This was the time, when the cumulative effects of prolonged French influence, became most apparent in Vietnamese society. Customs, beliefs, education, communication, administration, living standards and scales of value - the list could be extended even further - virtually every facet of life was undergoing westernization to a greater or lesser degree. A whole generation had grown up during this era of change and measured its achievements in terms of graduates from the University

of Hanoi and the Grandes Ecoles of France instead of more traditional criteria. The leaders of these new style Vietnamese, having qualified themselves to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, administrative officials, and the like, received relatively large material awards which enabled them to live in conditions of some comfort, if not luxury. Such persons constituted an affluent bourgeois social class hitherto unknown in Vietnam which tended to collaborate with the French rulers for reasons of self-interest and security rather than because of any moral conviction. All of these men had studied French literature in the course of their schooling, and the majority continued to read French books for pleasure thereafter. Some of their number received their higher education in Metropolitan France, where they were universally accepted, and made a wide variety of French friends and acquaintances. Inevitably they were interested in the many new and unfamiliar ideas they encountered, not least in the greater freedom permitted in French political life. "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite" ceased to be an empty slogan, for they observed it in its application, and most were deeply influenced by what they saw. Inspired by the results of the French and American Revolutions, the Meiji Transformation in Japan and the proletarian Revolution in Russia, they discussed these and examined the conditions in Vietnam from a different perspective. It was but a step from there to demand the right to work, to voice their ideas, freely to participate in the administration of their own country. This led them to become increasingly enthusiastic in their support

for demands to establish Viet-Nam's independence but, that newly engendered sentiment of nationalism was enhanced by an important trend they believed they had perceived taking place at that time: the rise of Japan and the decadence of France. Indeed, the Japanese occupation of Hainan and their subsequent intervention in Indochina, apparently confirmed this view and raised the hope of a number of Vietnamese nationalist revolutionaries. The German occupation of France provided still further evidence and inspiration the southern segment of the Indochinese Communist Party to organise and lead an insurrection in Cochinchina (September 1940). But the French colonial rulers did not share this Vietnamese interpellation of events and remained determined to retain a firm hold on Viet-Nam despite setbacks elsewhere. They reacted swiftly to suppress the uprising and did not balk at strong measures: prisons and special detention camps were soon filled to overcrowding with arrested Communists or suspected sympathisers. Several high ranking revolutionary leaders whose number included Le Hong Phong, Ha Huy Tap, Phan Dang Luu, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai - all of these had returned after training from Moscow - were gaoled or executed and the nucleus of the Communist Party in Viet-Nam was practically destroyed.

After such a failure, Viet-Nam had to endure a double burden, the tightening control of the French administration and the increasing economic pressure resulting from Japanese expansion. The Vietnamese economy depended heavily upon trade with France, but the war in Europe and

the German occupation of France terminated this traffic and produced a serious economic deterioration. The subsequent arrival of increasing numbers of Japanese troops further aggravated the situation. Under the terms of "bilateral agreements" negotiated under duress in May 1941, the French authorities were obliged to direct the greater part of Indochina's exports in rice and other materials to Japan. Shortages of materials to satisfy pressing military needs, forced the Japanese authorities in Indochina to manufacture badly needed fuel from locally grown grain and to order jute and cotton to be planted in large numbers of ricefields instead of rice. At the same time, because the railways were used almost exclusively by the Japanese military, it became impossible to despatch rail freight, so that the rice surplus in South Viet-Nam had to be burnt to make fertilizer at a time when Central and North Viet-Nam were suffering severe food shortages. Rice became hard to find in these regions and its scarcity produced monetary inflation. Still later, when the harvests of 1944 failed, a disastrous famine ravaged the country, causing the deaths of a million people!

While the economic situation grew progressively worse and approached a point at which there would be a chance of violent public protest, the whole country remained uninformed about political developments. The ordinary people were not only completely ignorant of the outside world but even of other parts of their own country beyond the limits of the districts in which they lived. The better educated, whose activities were constantly subject

to supervision by both French and Japanese authorities, were reduced to mental confusion by ceaseless changes on the international stage and by the contradictory news and rumours from the various sources available to them. It was rumoured, and widely believed, that the Japanese would help Viet-Nam to regain her independence, that the exiled prince Cường-Đê would return to head a new independent Government, that some of the clandestine nationalist organisations like the Phuc-Quoc (Restoration), Tân-Việt (New Viet-Nam) or Đại-Việt (Great Viet-Nam) were ready to cooperate with the new Government. Since the name Cường-Đê had long been linked with that of Phan Bội Châu as twin symbols of Vietnamese nationalism, these rumours won additional credence because people wanted to believe them.

The appearance of special courses in Japanese language, which were then being offered in a number of localities, together with the growth in the number of self-professed pro-Japanese officials, served to lend added plausibility to the rumours.

In Viet-Nam, a country not remarkable for clemency towards the defeated side in war, there had always existed a strong impulsion to place oneself on the side of the victors. At the period in question, it appeared very plain to all Vietnamese that French power was visibly declining whereas the authority of the Japanese was growing. Political opportunists sought to further their own careers by early collaboration with the Japanese while ordinary citizens deemed collaboration to be no more than prudent. Personal ambition and the more fundamental

instinct of self-preservation dictated the course of co-operation with the Japanese, while thoughts of resisting their seemingly overwhelming military might appeared entirely unrealistic. Moreover, many of the Vietnamese people were genuinely impressed by the high capability and strict discipline of the Japanese troops, just as they were frightened by the instant and drastic punishment inflicted on all who offended against them.

Even the French administrators of Indochina, long regarded by the Vietnamese as arrogant and unheeding, then found it politic to show themselves extremely "flexible" and to offer concession after concession.¹ In the South, several nationalist leaders, prominent Trotskyites and the two politico-religious bodies, the Cao-Đài and the Hòa-Hảo evinced their willingness to co-operate with the Nippon forces in the "Greater East-Asia programme".

This delicate situation was capable of placing insuperable tactical difficulties in the path of the revolutionary group headed by Nguyen Ai Quoc, who later adopted the name Ho Chi Minh. Not only had Japan been for many years an enemy of the Soviet Union,² but she was also engaged in a devastating war against China, the country in which Nguyen Ai Quoc had been appointed to work by the Comintern, and where he had been ordered to collaborate closely with the Chinese Communist Party.³ A further complicating factor was the conviction inculcated into all Communist Party members, that the Chinese Red forces would inevitably emerge victorious from the armed struggle. Moreover, since Japan had signed with

Germany an anticomintern pact (25 November 1936), no dedicated comintern agent could ever contemplate cooperation with the Japanese forces.

On the other hand, the Stalin-Hitler pact of 29 September 1939 and later, the Russo-Japanese agreement of non-aggression (13 April 1941) seemed to suggest that coalition with a rising power, be it Germany or Japan, might be viewed as a temporary policy of expediency under certain circumstances. Because, since the fall of France in Europe (June 1940), French power in Indochina had declined steadily and Japanese forces were plainly engaged in a campaign to terminate it altogether, fighting the Japanese might well be construed as assisting France to maintain her colonial empire. Such action would surely destroy the anti-colonial image which constituted the principal popular attraction of any Vietnamese revolutionary organisation.⁴

Anti-French feeling was undeniably rising to new heights in Viet-Nam, but it was accompanied by a deep and widespread apprehension.

In the Nghe-Tinh area, the home of many Vietnamese revolutionaries, the French authorities had only just suppressed the mutiny of Do-Luong⁵ when they introduced new measures designed to inspire terror and obedience in the people.⁶ Many known opponents of the administration, together with suspects who included several Catholic priests, were arrested and incarcerated in the special political prisons of Dak To, Lao Beo, Poulo Condor ...⁷

The painful and tragic aftermath of the Nghe-Tinh insurrection in 1930-1931 was vividly recalled so that

the majority of the people became fearful and compliant. The Nghe-Tinh movement had, indeed, been understood by the common people at that time, to be nothing more than a peasant demonstration to demand food and justice from the authorities. When it ended in several tumultuous riots which brought a heavy toll in human lives and in which red flags bearing the hammer-and-sickle emblem were everywhere carried, most of the participants were dismayed. When French forces started their onslaught, poor uncomprehending peasants with no means of defending themselves were left to die alone without any of the help or succour some of the instigators of the disturbances had promised them. To make matters worse, some of the rioters, identifying the French with Roman Catholicism, shouted anti-religious slogans and made vicious assaults on Vietnamese Christians, killing a few of them, including one parish priest in Ha-Tinh. The campaign of religious conflict conducted by the Literati movement some forty years earlier recommenced. Moreover, the frightening slogan "Away with all intellectuals, rich men, landlords and notabilities" which gained wide currency at the time, installed terror and disillusion, alienating a large section of the population.⁸ That Nghe-Tinh insurrection was later termed "anti-imperialist" but the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese people did not understand what it meant in 1930-1931 and even in the 1940's still could not grasp its meaning. For these people, the whole episode was simply a bloody Communist riot enticing the pointless shedding of much innocent blood. The formation of some revolutionary adminis-

trative committees, which somewhat pretentiously termed themselves soviets, un Nghe-An and Ha-Tinh (hence the name Nghe-Tinh SOVIET given later to the event) confirmed the Communist character and the Russian origin of the whole movement which proved to be, in several instances, anti-religious as well. ⁹

Thus, during this period, many people, Christian or otherwise, were understandably afraid of being involved in a Communist outbreak or a religious conflict under the banner of some strange revolutionary organisation. ¹⁰

Such was the situation of Viet-Nam in the early 1940's, a situation characterized by misery, oppression and fear, also confusion, pessimism and much division. In some sections of the population, there was an obvious rebelling mood, especially among the poor and the young. Yet, Confucianist tradition was still the rule of life for the whole country, and people still believed that the destiny of the nation was entrusted in the hands of the emperor Bao Dai, together with the mandate of Heaven. Along this traditional respect for the legitimate authority, there was a widespread and strong feeling against Communism.

This was, indeed, not an entirely favourable "revolutionary situation". To avoid a disastrous failure like that of 1930, the Vietnamese Communists adopted, at first, a cautious attitude and remained faithful to the guidelines given to them some time before, namely

".... to abstain from aiming too high in its demands (independence, parliament etc...) lest it would

fall into the trap of the Japanese Fascists;

.... to claim only for the democratic rights - freedom of association, meeting, press and opinion, general amnesty for political prisoners; to fight for the right of participating in legal activities."

This was really a safe measure to protect the secret organisation from French and Japanese suppression, to prepare and save its well-trained cadres for action at some more propitious juncture in the future, and also to avoid alienating the sympathies of other nationalist organisations or of the very large numbers of ordinary people who had suffered severely in the wake of the Nghe-Tinh Soviet.

The second stage of this policy of caution demanded the erection of an entirely new revolutionary organisation. In order to be effective, the new body would need, not only a carefully elaborated and realistic plan of campaign, but the active support of the great majority of ordinary Vietnamese people. Moreover, the organisation would have to have competent leaders capable of attracting to it, people from all walks of life. The man who drew up the policy of caution which was adopted and implemented by the Party, was Nguyen Ai Quoc, a Comintern staff member and the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party.

Nguyen was well aware that, in circumstances fraught with the many difficulties set out above, any revolutionary plan, to be successful, must first secure the approval of the patriotic educated classes, the collaboration of

all the divers Vietnamese political parties such as the Royalist, the Phuc Quoc (Restoration), the Dai-Viet (Great Viet Nam), the Quoc Dan Dang (Nationalist Party), and required above all else, the support of the people as a whole. There existed only one political course common to all strata of Vietnamese society as well as to every political party, the cause of national liberation from French colonial rule and the establishment of an independent Viet-Nam. If the unified support of the whole Vietnamese nation were to be won, then that cause alone should be propagated and every other political or ideological matter should be set aside.

Accordingly, Nguyen, who was a co-founder of the French Communist Party in the 1920's and had devoted the whole of his adult life exclusively to the establishment of a Communist regime in Viet-Nam, went to unparalleled lengths to conceal his own ideology and to extend to every Vietnamese, a patriotic appeal to join the struggle for national independence. His action represented no more than a tactical move made to satisfy the immediate requirements of the moment, and he certainly contemplated no abandonment of his Communist objectives. He was simply applying to the situation which existed in Vietnam, the political techniques he had acquired during his years of training in Moscow and implementing the strategy which had been successfully employed in Russia some years earlier, the two-stage revolution. The first stage demanded by that struggle was a bourgeois-democratic revolution, to be followed later by the socialist or Communist revolution.¹²

Success in the first stage, namely the democratic revolution, demanded obtaining the actual participation of the whole population, old and young, rich and poor, workers, peasants, bourgeois and intellectuals as well, in a united national front, which aimed at a single objective, national independence. Such a national front was already in Nguyen Ai Quoc's mind when he reported to the Comintern:

To attain those objectives, the Party must do its best to create a wide national democratic front which would include not only Indochinese but also progressive French, not only the labouring classes but also the national bourgeoisie.

Towards the national bourgeoisie, the Party must be clever and flexible.

It must do its best to win the bourgeoisie over to the cause of this Front, rallying to it all those who could be rallied, neutralizing all those who could be neutralized. They must not be excluded from the Front because that would push them over into the arms of the counter revolutionaries, thus reinforcing the reactionary camp. 13

Before it could command the approval and participation of the whole people, a front of this kind had to be led by a man whose name could inspire respect and confidence. Since the name Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen, the Patriot), had been identified with the disastrous Soviet movement of 1930-1931, this extremely shrewd and resourceful man prudently decided to shed that once magnetic name and adopt a new one: Ho Chi Minh (Ho, the most enlightened).

A most enlightened revolutionary to lead a united front for the salvation of the whole country! What could be better suited to the task? This was indeed, the first example of Vietnamese Communist persuasion at work.

Footnotes for chapter II

1. The Japanese required the closing of the supply line to China and themselves assumed control of the Sino-Vietnamese border (19 June 1940); Governor General Decoux was obliged to accept the entry of the Japanese forces into Indochina (September 1940), to yield specified tracts of Cambodian and Laotian territory to Thailand upon a Japanese request, and to export Indochina's rice, corn, rubber, coal and minerals to Japan (May 1941).
2. Russia can never forget her defeat by Japan in the 1904-1905 war. It is of interest that, during that war, Russian warships had to take shelter once at Cam Ranh Bay which, during the 1960's was to become a huge American base established to support South Viet Nam in the Vietnamese war.
3. As early as 1930, Ho Chi Minh told Nguyễn Lữ[~]ng Bả[~]ng in China: "If we wish to make further progress, we must accept help from the Chinese Communist Party. Wherever he is working, a Communist must always place himself under the leadership of the local Party." (Bác Hồ, Hanoi, 1960; p.60). See also the letter sent by the Chinese Communist Party to the Indo-chinese Communist Party in 1934, quoted in Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, pp.45-46.
4. Applying the tactic of "phase politics", the Communist Party continuously changed their various fronts so as to remain in step with the requirements of the international situation or events: Anti-fascist Front (1935), Anti-imperialist people's Front (1936), Indochina Democratic Front (1937), Anti-imperialist National Unified Front (1939), League for the Independence of Viet-Nam and National Salvation Front (1941) and so forth.

5. Led by Sergeant Cung, a group of soldiers mutinied and occupied the Cho Rang Post in Do-Luong, Nghe-An (13 January 1941).
6. In Pho Chau (Huong-Son, Ha-Tinh), Hồ Hảo killed a French officer in protest and escaped with some of his men. After he had been captured and executed, by the order of the French authorities at the Post of Pho Chau, Ho's body was hung in a public place to be cursed by the passers-by. This kind of intimidation produced a double effect: people were genuinely frightened by it but they also came to hate their French rulers more.
7. Among the priests taken prisoner were Revs. Le Suong Hue, Nguyen Hong An, Rev. Trieu and Rev. Huan.
8. In Vietnamese: "Trí, Phú, Địa, Hào, Đào tận gốc, Tróc tận rễ". Later, the Central Committee of Propaganda of the Vietnamese Communist Party declared it an incorrect slogan: "Its aim was to strengthen the Party but it was found, in practice, to create difficulties for the movement". Ba mươi năm tranh đấu của Đảng (Thirty years of Struggle of the Party), Hanoi 1960); p.31.
9. This writer, while still a child, witnessed the funeral of Rev. Nguyen Khang, the parish priest of Tràng-Đĩnh (Ha Tinh province) who had been killed and then burnt in his own church. Many of his parishoners and relatives survive today in both North and South Viet Nam. A detailed account can be found in the Annales of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (1931).
10. In the wake of the Nghe-Tinh Soviet, an anti-communist campaign was launched: newspapers,

pamphlets, folksongs... tried to "unmask Soviet Communism, denounce its violent, subversive, inhuman, anti-religious schemes". The "Association of Reasonable Men", was set up to warn the notabilities and the educated people against the dangers of the "Three Without" (without family, without fatherland, without religion), propagated by the Communists and against the foolhardy rashness of the pro-Soviet agitators". The Catholic Church also strongly condemned the anti-religious deeds of the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement and denounced the militant atheism of the Communist doctrine. Consequently, Communism came to be regarded as a curse and the name Nguyen Ai Quoc, closely identified with Communism, as an object of hatred. Offended by his son's disrespect, a father did not hesitate to call him "a communist" (personal experience of this writer). A dog stealing a piece of meat in the kitchen was also compared to a communist (anecdote told by Dong Tung, a former comrade of Ho Chi Minh). This anti-communist feeling, which was widespread in the Nghe-Tinh area, was understandably denounced later by the Communist Party as "reactionary and anti-revolutionary". Rf. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, Hanoi; 1960; Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, Hanoi; Editions en Langues Etrangeres, 1960, p.34.

11. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyển Tập (Selected works), Hanoi; 1960, p.201.
12. This two-stage procedure was also applied in the very beginning of his revolutionary career: Nguyen Ai Quoc first founded the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association which was transformed only later into the Indochinese Communist Party. This same

tactic regulated the whole course of his
life-long political activities.

13. Ho Chi Minh, Op.cit., p.201.

Chapter III

The Cuu Quoc Organisation and the DOC LAP, TU DO Theme.

As related in the previous chapter, throughout the period of the second World War, Viet Nam underwent a profound change in social life and a disastrous economic depression while the political atmosphere was tense and suffocating because of the double yoke of French and Japanese domination at the same Time.

As misery became increasingly widespread, resentment grew deeper and the Vietnamese people grew increasingly restless. Nguyen Ai Quoc issued a letter solemnly indicting both "the French invaders" and the "Japanese plunderers". Then, citing the "Heroic spirit" of the indomitable nation throughout the centuries, the "Heroic feats" of the recent Viet revolutionaries, and "the heroic example of the Chinese people" in their fight against the Japanese invaders, "Nguyen, the Patriot" raised high the banner of Doc Lap, Tu Do (Independence and Freedom), to advocate an immediate national uprising:

The opportunity has come for our liberation....Compatriots throughout the country! Rise up quickly! Saving the country is the common duty of the whole of our people. Every Vietnamese must take part in it. He who has money will contribute his money, he who has strength will contribute his strength, he who has talent will contribute his talent.... 1

This "sacred call of the Fatherland", Nguyen the Patriot took pains to address explicitly to "the elders

and prominent personalities", "to rich people, soldiers, workers, peasants, intellectuals, employees, traders, youth and women who warmly love your country". ²

Realizing the necessity of cooperation from all revolutionary forces, especially those elders and scholars, intellectuals and bourgeois who had taken part in previous organisations and activities directed by nationalist leaders like Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh, he has a special message for them:

Revolutionary fighters!
The hour has struck! Raise aloft
the insurrectionary banner and
guide the people throughout the
country to overthrow the Japanese
and French! The sacred call of
the Fatherland is resounding in
your ears; the blood of our heroic
predecessors who sacrificed their
lives is stirring in your hearts!
The fighting spirit of the people
is displayed everywhere before
you! Let us rise up quickly! ³

After asking all his compatriots to "unite together", to "have the same heart and mind" to save the country, he offered himself totally to serve the noble cause of the whole nation:

I pledge to use all my modest abilities
to follow you, and am ready for the
last sacrifice. ⁴

Clearly but indirectly, those brief words immediately enthroned Nguyen the Patriot, as a shining example of total dedication and skilful leadership. This moving appeal brought back to the mind of the Vietnamese people the fiery language of their

national heroes, Trần Hưng Đạo and Nguyễn Trãi, who had both successfully mobilized the whole people against foreign domination.

In Hanoi, undeclared Communists whose Party affiliation was still unsuspected, infiltrated various organisations, newspapers and other activities in order to make contact with their members and to urge these to work for "independence and freedom". They organized a Cultural Program to discuss the "culture of the new democracy", helped national bourgeois and intellectuals like Duong Duc Hien and the Thanh Nghi (Excellent Opinion, the name of a high calibre periodical) Group to found "their own political party", the Tân Dân Chủ (New Democracy), to add more political agitation among the people, especially the intelligentsia and students.

Similar ideas and messages were sent to various parts of the country by means of clandestine papers which were of small size and had only two or four pages. These well written papers, by emphasizing the need for Independence and Democracy, and appealing to the patriotic sentiments of the people, proved to be highly effective as a means of propaganda. Their very names were carefully chosen so as to convey some meaningful message or explosive slogan: Tổ Quốc (Fatherland), Độc Lập (Independence), Nhân Dân (People), Cứu Quốc (National Salvation), Giải Phóng (Liberation), Chiến Đấu (Combat), Tiền Phong (Vanguard), and the like.

The majority of people did not know how to read or write, but these were not neglected by the Communist who made extensive use of Vietnamese popular literature, which

they rightly considered "the powerful tool of mass education". The ordinary Vietnamese people always love to hear and to learn by heart many ca, vè (popular rhymes, folk songs). They also liked to spread any news around by the most popular and inexpensive communication medium, namely tiếng đồn (rumours). Accordingly, the Communist leaders took pains to compose and to popularize some ca, vè to start some rumours in order to carry their messages deep down into the masses.

From this campaign of tuyên truyền miệng (oral propaganda), people learned, for example, these popular verses:

Nào ai khinh kiếp tôi đòi,
 Nào ai muốn sống cuộc đời tự do,
 Mau đứng dưới ngọn cờ phản đế,
 Nghìn tay giở như thể một tay.
 Đuổi thẳng Nhật, diệt thẳng Tây
 Tham quan bạo chúa ra tay tiêu trừ. 5

These verses, excerpted from Bài ca phản đế (Anti-imperialist song: see Appendix A2, page 456) may be loosely translated as follows:

Aren't you despising the slavish life?
 Aren't you longing for a free life?
 Under the anti-imperialist banner quickly
 unite!
 Together raise up your arms, a thousand
 as a single one.
 Drive away the Japanese, destroy the French
 enemies!
 Corrupted mandarins and brutal rulers,
 down with them!

Some other people imitated the bugle to sound out an appeal:

Chào cờ! Dựng cờ (dựng)
 Ta cùng xông trận, trừ diệt thù!
 Giăng tay cho ngọn cờ bay
 Cờ bay, bay bay bay...
 Cờ bay trên đội hồng quân
 Cờ Độc lập! rạng cờ (rạng)
 Toàn châu rạng ngời! 6

Salute! Raise the flag!
 Let us charge! Destroy the enemy!
 Open wide your arms before the flying flag.
 The flag's flying, flying, flying...
 Flying over the Red Army
 The flag of independence
 Glorious over the universe!

Such ⁹ri tai (whispering) method, being anonymous, was extremely safe, especially when the ruling authorities were looking for proofs to indict insurrectionary leaders. And yet, being popular, easy to learn, easy to remember, those words proved an extremely effective form of propaganda in Viet Nam, a land highly fertile in rumour and whisper.

By means of rumours, folk songs, legal and illegal papers, pamphlets and books, the Communists succeeded in re-awakening that ardent nationalism which had so often been the driving force in the Vietnamese revolutionary movements of earlier times. Vietnamese people in all walks of life were already well conditioned by their own history to become highly receptive to the call to arms to restore the nation's independence and freedom. But, all Vietnamese are essentially pragmatic, and they had not forgotten the repeated failures of ill-fated patriotic movements during the previous hundred years, so they exercised prudence, and evinced a marked reluctance to embark on hazardous adventures.

Anticipating this reaction of doubt and fear, the Communist propagandists resorted to highly persuasive ways to dispose of possible disagreements, objections, opposition or reluctance.

To those who were afraid of French repression, there was a very convincing answer:

If we did not succeed, it was not because the French invaders were strong, but only because the situation was not yet ripe and our compatriots throughout the country were not yet of the same heart and mind. 7

.....
 Since France's defeat by the Germans, her forces have completely disintegrated....
 In foreign policy, the French bow their heads and kneel down, shamelessly ceding our land to Siam; without a single word of protest, they heartlessly offer our interests to Japan. 8

By demonstrating with the aid of these and similar concrete examples of the French rulers' current weakness and wickedness, the appeal applied a sharp stimulus to the national pride of every Vietnamese calculated to arouse his anger against the French. But how could anybody reasonably be expected to dare to fight against the Japanese troops who had shown themselves strong enough to invade China and to thrust aside the French administration in Indochina? To the Vietnamese people, who were actually living in almost total isolation from the rest of the world, an authoritative assurance was offered in the form of a "Letter from abroad" by "Nguyen the Patriot", who, people believed, must be well informed about the situation of the world outside Vietnam:

As to the Japanese, on the one hand they are bogged down in China, on the other they are hamstrung by the British and American forces, and certainly cannot use all their forces to contend with us. If our entire people are united and single-minded, we are certainly capable of smashing the wicked French and Japanese troops. 9

Even when their major objections had been convincingly answered and their emotions set ablaze by so eloquent an appeal and the emotive cause of Doc Lap (independence), the Vietnamese people were still troubled by one remaining difficulty. How was all this to be achieved? It was at that juncture that the Communist Party felt impelled to proceed from the first task facing it to the second, from the mobilization of the masses to the construction of the national united front

A national united front was believed to be "indispensable", as Truong Chinh, the then Secretary General of the Indochinese Communist Party, later explained:

Revolution is the work of the broad masses of people and not of the communists alone. Therefore, to make a revolution successful, it is necessary to organize the masses and rally all the national and democratic forces into a broad front having a common political platform, reflecting the interests of all sections of the population and all social classes.... The platform, appellation and composition of the front may be modified in conformity with the task of each revolutionary period so as to meet the immediate requirements of that period. 10

The broad front that answered the requirements of the Viet Nam situation in the 1940's was the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Literally: the Association of the Allied Parties for the Independence of Viet Nam), loosely translated as the League for Viet Nam Independence. It was abbreviated by contracting the first word of the long title with the last two, so that it became the Viet Minh Hoi (Viet Minh Association) or simply Viet Minh. This abbreviated name was at the same time concise and harmonious, and its novelty appealed greatly to the Vietnamese people, who always attach much importance to the sound of a title as well as its underlying meaning. Besides their peculiar taste for what they term chơi chữ (playing with words), the Vietnamese, who were greatly influenced by the Confucian tradition, were always preoccupied with the principle of chính danh (rectification of names) whose meaning is conveyed by the precept governing it: danh chính ngôn thuận (in order to speak effectively, one must use the correct term). Consequently, the term Viet Minh quickly became a subject for speculation and a topic of conversation. Little wonder that when writing about the name Viet Minh, the official outline of the Indochinese Communist Party's History affirmed that it was "a name full of significance which facilitated the mobilization of the masses' national spirit". 11

One "unofficial source" even went so far as to explain that the term Dong Minh (Allied Political Parties) in the title of Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi indicated that the

Viet Minh organization was Viet Nam's representative with the Dong Minh (the Vietnamese term for the Allies in World War II, U.S.A., Britain, Russia, France, China) in their struggle against the Fascists.

It was also rumoured that the Allied Countries were actually supporting the Viet Minh in military training, with arms and ammunition as well as with financial aid.

Several different origins are today ascribed to the Viet Minh, and these will be discussed later, but in the 1940's the Viet Minh was introduced to the people by the undeclared members of the Communist Party simply as a broad front formed to rally the different strata of people and the national revolutionary forces "to win back the Independence of Viet Nam".

Combined to form this Mặt trận Việt Minh (again a new term, meaning: Viet Minh Front), were all the mass organisations of Cứu Quốc, i.e., National Salvation or, to be more faithful to the Vietnamese language, "Saving the Country". This emotive term Cứu Quốc was a happy choice, conveying as it did the double connection of patriotism and of emergency.

Indeed, the term Cứu (help, save) is normally associated with vớt (lift from the water) to say cứu vớt i.e., to save or to rescue (literally: to save from drowning). The same term Cứu may also be used with Cấp (hurry, haste) to form the compound word cấp cứu meaning first aid, emergency or "snatching from the jaws of death". Because of this connotation of imminent danger of death, the term Cứu is used in forming several succinct expressions of emergency: cứu hỏa (fire emergency), cứu lụt (flood alarm),

cứu đói (famine rescue) and the like. Since the term cứu is equivalent to an urgent cry for help such as S.O.S., when applied to "our fatherland in danger" (tổ quốc lâm nguy) or to the organisations of a "national united front to save the country", so appealing a term does not admit any pretext for refusal or even delay in joining it.

Cứu Quốc and Viet Minh, those happily chosen terms were actually related to Cứu đói (famine rescue) in a highly persuasive appeal issued by the Viet Minh Front in 1945:

To prevail against the present famine, every one of us should seek admission to the Viet Minh in order to ready himself for chasing out the Japanese.

Famine! Famine! Oh Famine! We must save our rice, capture the enemy's grain stocks, repel both French and Japanese. Our land is for us to cultivate without having to pay tax. Our rice is to feed us without our being robbed. To reach that goal, all our compatriots should join the Viet Minh:

Japs-French, go home!
Viet Nam be Independent!¹²

A direct appeal was also launched in the form of popular rhymes and entitled Bài ca Viet Minh (songs of the Viet Minh). To rekindle anger and hatred against the enemies of the nation, the campaign began with a litany of injustices that the Vietnamese had been made to suffer "at the hands of the French colonialists and the Japanese Fascists". A strong reaction against those foreign rulers was then fostered by the narration of historical uprisings with famous battles and victories. National heroes were cited sub-

sequently to introduce "a sacred call from our forefathers";

Đồng bào hỡi đây lời, tâm huyết,
 Đây tiên nhân đã viết cho ta,
 Khuyên ta giữ lấy nước nhà,
 Khuyên ta đứng dậy dựng cờ tử do.

Dear compatriots,
 Here's a confidential message,
 A sacred call from our forefathers
 Urging us to save our fatherland,
 Urging us to rise and to grasp freedom.

Anticipating that people might be tempted to think of other patriotic and revolutionary organisations such as the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Nationalist Party), the Đại Việt (Greater Viet Nam), the Phục Quốc (National Restoration), the Thanh Niên Ái Quốc (Patriotic Youth), the Thanh Niên Tiên Phong (Vanguard Youth) and so forth, the zealous propagandist globally and ruthlessly denounced all of these as pro-French, pro-Japanese and fake nationalist. After indicting other movements and parties of being traitorous, defeatist or duped by Frenchmen and Japanese, he introduced the Viet Minh Front as the best and the only way to save the country: using friendly but eloquent and persuasive language, the song played on patriotic sentiments and self-respect to urge all men who love their country, including highland minorities, Cambodians, Laotians and Thais, quickly to join the Viet Minh Front:

Đồng bào hội! trước nguy cơ,
 Nhà tan nước mất bấy giờ hỏi ai?
 Đường cứu nước cứu đời duy nhất
 Cờ Việt Minh đã phất trên đầu,
 Cùng nhau ta nắm tay nhau
 Không phân tôn giáo, nghèo giàu, gái trai.
 Nào thiên hạ ai người nghĩa khí,
 Nào nhân dân ai kẻ anh tài,
 Nào đoàn, nào hội những ai?
 Những ai yêu nước, ai người Việt Nam?
 Những ai muốn đánh tan giặc Pháp,
 Những ai mong cứu thoát giống nòi,
 Việt Minh tha thiết chào mời
 Mau vào Mặt trận diệt loài xâm lăng,
 Các đoàn thể Việt Nam cứu quốc
 Đang ra tay đón rước ân cần.
 Thợ thuyền, binh lính, nông dân,
 Thanh niên, phụ nữ, văn nhân, nhi đồng,
 Các phụ lão, phú ông, địa chủ,
 Bạc kỹ hào, điền hộ, thương gia,
 Hỡi hân dân tộc quốc gia,
 Mau mau tụ tập dưới cờ Việt Minh!
 Muồng, Mán, Thổ bất bình Pháp, Nhật,
 Thái, Miên, Lào cùng đất Đông-dương,
 Núi rừng tổ chí hiên ngang,
 Việt Minh nguyện bước lên đường đấu tranh.

Dear compatriots! facing national disaster and personal suffering, whom should we turn to? Behold the Viet Minh the unique way to save our country. Let us rally together without distinction of religion, status or sex. Where are our loyal and brave men? Where are our stouthearted groups and valient organisations? You who love your country, who are truly Vietnamese, You who are determined to destroy the French enemy to save our own nation, the Viet Minh Front embraces all of you; various groups of National Salvation welcome you to the common struggle against the aggressors. Workers, peasants, soldiers, students, intellectuals, young adults, seniors, women, children, bourgeois, notables, tradesmen, richmen, landowners, all true nationalists, quickly rally under the Viet Minh banner! Muong, Man, Tho, our minorities, who also hate the enemy, Thai, Mien, Lao, our neighbours on the same Indochina front, together with the Viet Minh, let us resolutely join the struggle to prove our heroic spirit.

The propaganda song ends artfully on a happy note and a beautiful picture of an independent and free Viet Nam enjoying life under the Viet Minh flag:

Dưới cò đỏ sao vàng năm cánh,
Hỡi đồng bào sát cánh chen vai,
Việt Nam riêng một góc trời
Xây nên độc lập muôn đời tự do.

Under the golden star on the red flag,
Dear compatriots! let's rally solidly
To build a glorious Viet Nam
For ever independent and totally free.

To such a pious profession of faith and hope, the Vietnamese people who had been aroused to awareness of their dire suffering from the loss of independence and freedom, could only respond with a resounding amen.

The next song many people learned from the Viet Minh was the Ngũ Tử Kinh (five-syllable ode) which by association of ideas, reminded them of the Tam Tử Kinh (three-syllable ode), the popular preliminary lesson of ethics in the Confucian tradition. The Ngũ Tử Kinh, however, was solely concerned with the question "how to organise a Viet Minh association?":

Muốn cho Hội vững chắc
Từng, tiêu tổ lập nên
Ba đến chín hội viên
Phải bầu người trưởng tổ.
Cứ hai ba tiêu tổ
Phải cử bạn chấp hành.
Kỷ luật phải nghiêm minh
Mỗi tháng hai kỳ họp....

To have a solid foundation
Our association should start with small cells
having three to nine members
Who elect a leader for themselves.
A group of two, three cells

Should elect an executive committee.
 Strict discipline must be maintained
 And bi-weekly meetings well attended....

Since "saving the country" was the common duty of the whole nation, every Vietnamese was insistently urged to join some branch of "this great organisation" according to his age, sex, profession or even religious denomination: children, teenagers, youth, old people, women, workers, peasants, students, writers, Buddhists, Catholics... for National Salvation.

For each category, Công, Nông, Binh, Phụ, (Workers, Peasants, Soldiers, Women), Ho Chi Minh himself had composed some popular rhymes of sympathy and exhortation.

At the head of the list stood the workers, "the producers for the benefit of mankind". They had had to endure so much misery because "having lost their national independence, they had been cruelly exploited by the French and Japanese rulers". Standing in the ranks of those poor workers, the old revolutionary Ho challenged them to go forward in the van to liberate the country and liberate themselves:

Thở, thuyên, ta phải đứng ra,
 Trước ta cứu nước sau ta cứu mình.
 Cùng nhau vào hội Việt Minh,
 Ra tay tranh đấu hy sinh mỗi lần.
 Bao giờ khôi phục nước nhà
 Của ta ta giữ, công ta ta cảm. 13

We, workers, must take the lead
 In saving the country and ourselves.
 Let us join the Viet Minh
 And spend ourselves in struggle and sacrifice!
 When the national restoration has been successful
 We shall keep what we own and enjoy the
 fruits of our work.

Next were the peasants, those landless peasants who had known nothing but hard work. Oppressed by the crushing taxes and corvees, and living a "buffalo-like" existence, they had never enjoyed sufficient food, decent shelter or human dignity. Because it was their normal custom to invoke assistance from heaven, a 'god-given opportunity' was then offered to them:

Muốn phá sạch mọi bất bình,
 Dân cây phải kiếm Việt Minh mà vào.
 Đề cũng toàn quốc đồng bào
 Đánh Pháp, Nhật, gây phong trào tử do.
 Dịp này là dịp trời cho;
 Lo cứu nước tức là lo cứu mình.
 Mai sau thực hiện chương trình:
 Nông dân có ruộng mình làm ăn. 14

To abolish all injustice
 Peasants should seek the Viet Minh and join it.
 The national struggle for freedom
 Against the French and Japanese.
 This is a god-given opportunity
 To save the country and save themselves.
 The programme will soon be realized,
 Happiness is "land for the tillers".

The peasants allied with the workers would provide the main force of the revolution. But Vietnamese police and soldiers were ordered by their foreign officers to shoot and kill other Vietnamese whenever protests or insurrections broke out! Appealing to their sense of honour and nationalist sentiments, the revolutionary propaganda asked them to make a choice between, on the one hand, the foreign oppressors who brought so much suffering to Viet Nam, and on the other their own compatriots who were struggling hard for the national salvation that is freedom and happiness for all:

Anh em binh lính ta ơi!
 Chúng ta cùng giống cùng nòi Việt Nam.
 Việc chi lỗi nước thì làm
 Cứu dân, cứu nước há cam kém người,
 Trong tay đã sẵn súng rồi
 Quyết quay đánh Nhật, đánh Tây mỗi đánh.
 Tiếng thồm sẽ, tác sử xanh:
 "Quân nhân cứu quốc" rạng danh muôn đời. 15

Our compatriot soldiers!
 We are brothers of the same Viet Nam race and
 nation.
 Please do what you can for our country!
 In saving the nation and the country,
 who can outdo you?
 With guns ready in your hands
 Resolutely turn them on Japanese and French.
 History will engrave your everlasting names:
 "Soldier Saviours", glory of the nation!

Realizing that women constituted the majority of the
 population, exercised a great influence in Vietnamese
 families, and were less vulnerable to political revenge,
 the Communist leaders included them in their plans.
 Citing the heroic examples of the Trung, Trieu Ladies
 and of the young lady Minh Khai who had sacrificed her life
 after the Nam Ky (Cochinchina) Insurrection of November
 1940, Ho injected a challenge in his call:

Bây giờ cỡ hội đã gần
 Đánh Tây, đánh Nhật, cứu dân, cứu nhà.
 Cho nên phụ nữ nước ta
 Phải đoàn kết lại đề mả đầu tranh.
 Đưa nhau vào hội Việt Minh
 Làm cho rõ mặt cháu Tiên, con Rồng. 16

The moment is approaching
 To fight the French and Japanese to save our
 Nation and our Families.

Women of our country,
 Unite and fight!
 Emulate one another in the
 Viet Minh,
 Make it known, the great
 spirit of the Vietnamese
 As descendants of the Fairy
 and the Dragon.

Because of the foreign oppression, even children
 had to suffer poverty and ignorance. Being innocent
 and unsuspected, they could too have a contribution
 to make:

Người lớn cứu nước đã đành
 Trẻ em cũng góp phần mình một tay.
 Bao giờ đuổi hết Nhật, Tây,
 Trẻ em ta sẽ là bay con cùng.

.....
 "Nhì đồng cứu quốc" hỏi ta,
 Ấy là lực lượng, ấy là cứu tinh,
 Ấy là bộ phận Việt Minh,
 Dân mình khắc cứu dân mình mới xong. 17

True, national salvation is adults' work
 But children have their share to con-
 tribute.
 When the French and the Japanese
 are defeated,
 Our children will be much more
 cherished.

.....
 Our Association of Children for
 National Salvation is, indeed, our
 strength and our liberation.
 This is a branch of the Viet Minh
 Front. Our people will do better to
 save themselves.

Bourgeois, intellectuals and landlords, persons
 who might feel uneasy in the mass organisations, were

invited to join the Viet Minh, "lest they fall into the arms of the counter-revolutionaries". The revolutionary movement had a message for them too:

Hoi ai con cháu Hong Bang!
 Chung ta phai biet ket doan mau mau.
 Yeu nhau xin nho loi nhau
 Viet Minh hoi ay mau mau tim vao.¹⁸

O descendants of Hong Bang
 (the legendary ancestors of
 the Vietnamese)!
 Let us unite together quickly!
 If we have mutual love for one another,
 please remember our mutual message:
 Let us join the Viet Minh soon!

What happened to those who did not join the Viet Minh? Those who consistently refused to become Viet Minh members either by joining or helping the cửu quốc organizations, were rightly labeled non-cửu quốc, but this relatively innocuous term subsequently gave way to other, more derogatory terms such as phản động (reactionary), or Việt gian (Vietnamese traitor). This newly invented term Viet gian developed into an instrument of dialectical pressure, a potent political weapon. Thus, a new contribution to the art of political persuasion was added by a clever use of words.

Another interesting example of "applied playing with words" was found in the case of Dao duy Anh, an outstanding scholar who was attacked and condemned as phan dong. A Viet Minh underground paper carried his political death sentence in popular rhymes and ended with the threatening verse:

Đào ới! đào lỗ đi thôi! 19
 (Oh Mr. Đào! It's time to
 đào (dig) your grave!)

On the above-mentioned forms of propaganda, the Viet Minh super-imposed a "higher form of struggle" by adding military force to political activities, which resulted in the creation of a Brigade of Armed Propaganda for National Liberation. This Armed Propaganda Unit, with a name "full of significance", was introduced to people as a preliminary show of force:

Because ours is a national resistance conducted by the whole people, we must mobilize and arm the whole people... Concerning tactics, we will apply guerilla warfare which consists in being secret, rapid, active, now in the East now in the West, arriving unexpectedly and leaving unnoticed. The Viet Nam Armed Propaganda Unit for National Liberation is the first born unit. It is hoped that other units will soon come into being.

At first its size is small; its prospects, however, are brilliant. It is the embryo of the Liberation Army and can move from North to South, throughout Viet Nam. 20

The effectiveness of these different forms of propaganda was determined by such factors as geography and the situation obtaining in each locality. In the event, the Viet Minh movement reached more people in the North West area of the country (a mountainous region extending to the Chinese border which served as a sanctuary for the Viet Minh) and

in some of the larger cities such as Hanoi and Haiphong than elsewhere. In other areas, even in Nghe Tinh, the home province of Ho Chi Minh and the traditional cradle of Vietnamese revolution, most people knew nothing of the Viet Minh and the Cuu Quoc Organisations until August 1945, after the defeat of Japan.

The Viet Minh, then, needed to win the allegiance of those people who were still uncommitted because they had prudently decided to await developments before making up their minds. For the purpose of persuading them to "follow the crowd" and "side with the winner", Ho Chi Minh issued an appeal immediately following the Japanese surrender to the Allied Countries, which was perfectly designed to exploit the psychological shock induced by the defeat of this supposedly invincible force:

At present, the Japanese army is crushed. The Cuu Quoc Movement has spread to the whole country. The Revolutionary Front of Viet Minh has millions of members from all social strata: intellectuals, peasants, workers, businessmen, soldiers, and from all nationalities in the country: Kinh, Tho, Nung, Muong, Man, and so on. In the Front our compatriots march side by side without discrimination as to age, sex, religion or wealth.

.....
The Viet Minh Front is at present the basis of our struggle and our national solidarity. Join the Viet Minh Front, support it, make it greater and stronger!

In this way, our Fatherland will certainly win Independence and

our people will certainly win
Freedom soon. 21

To emphasize nationalism and capitalize on the people's patriotic sentiments, the Viet Minh leaders took pains to conceal their Communist ideology and such political activities as the "red organisations" and the conference of the Indochinese Communist Party in mid-August 1945. They chose, instead, to publicize the news of a "National Assembly organised by the Viet Minh Front" at Tan Trao (16 - 17 August 1945). This policy was thus rationalized at the above-said conference:

We must practice political prudence and firm perseverance. Prudence will shield us from several disadvantages while perseverance will lead us to complete independence. At the end of this war, any nation in the world that resolutely and single-mindedly seeks independence, will certainly be independent. 22

Accordingly, the Viet Minh Conference accepted a shrewdly worded programme:

1. Seize power, build a Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on the basis of complete independence.
2. Arm the people. Develop the Viet Nam Liberation troops.
3. Confiscate the properties of enemies and traitors in order to nationalize or to distribute them to the poor, according to the circumstances.
4. Abolish all the taxes enforced by French and Japanese rulers; establish a just and light taxation.
5. Grant democratic rights to the people: human rights, property rights (private ownership), and civil rights

- (universal suffrage, democratic freedom, equality of nationals and sexes).
6. Re-distribute communal lands; reduce land rent and interest rates, help the poor and the suffering.
 7. Proclaim labour laws: eight-hour work day, minimum wage, social security.....
 8. Build up national economy, develop agriculture, open a national bank.
 9. Reform national education, fight illiteracy, organize popular and obligatory education; build up the new culture.
 10. Develop friendly relations with the allied countries and the small nations to secure their agreement and support. 23

Every speech in the Viet Minh "National Assembly" emphasized national independence and freedom. But such a noble cause unquestionably required organisation and leadership. At the suggestion of the Viet Minh leaders, which was at once approved by the Assembly, two "national committees" were officially established and the term Viet Minh was unobtrusively replaced with Dan toc (Nation, national).

The National Liberation Committee headed by Ho Chi Minh, published an exciting appeal, emphasizing once again the tu-do, doc-lap theme:

Now is the decisive moment of life or death for our nation. Our work for national liberation still faces many difficulties. To achieve our independence and freedom, there is only one way for our whole nation: union and struggle....24

In its capacity of "provisional Government", Ho Chi Minh's National Liberation Committee delegated "plenipotentiary authority" to the Insurrection Committee headed by Võ Nguyên Giáp, one of Ho's lieutenants and his future defense secretary.

The historian Trần Huy Liệu drafted the first Military order for Giáp's Insurrection Committee, appealing for sacrifices on behalf of the Fatherland, and at the same time promising certain success:

Our dear people throughout the country!
Under the command of the Insurrection
Committee, let our compatriots wholeheart-
edly support the Liberation Army, join
the troops, dash to the battlefield to
put our enemies to flight.
Our Fatherland asks for your great sac-
rifices!
Complete success will certainly be ours! 25

To strengthen motivation and obtain more enthusiastic support from all strata of the people, the Viet Minh publicized a very attractive platform concerning domestic policy. This ten-point programme written in a succinct, simple, and clear language, was probably the most appealing and most effective political handbill ever known in the history of Viet Nam. The brief platform answered the perennial popular complaint against heavy taxation, touched on the sensitive issues of religion and political restriction, considered the needs of all groups, professions, and walks of life, and promised to fulfill them.

CHÍNH PHỦ VIỆT-MINH

Mười chính sách lớn đối với dân Việt-nam
của CHÍNH PHỦ VIỆT-MINH

1. Bỏ thuế thân do đế quốc đặt ra, lập một thứ thuế rất nhẹ và công bằng.
Tự do tín ngưỡng và tự do hội họp ;
2. Nông dân ai cũng có ruộng mà cấy cấy giúp đỡ cho nghề nông đủ được phần thịnh ;
3. Công nhân ngày 8 giờ ; lương sẽ đủ sống cho gia - đình ;
4. Cường bách giáo dục : trẻ em nhà nước giúp
5. Thương dân được tự do buôn bán, bỏ các thứ thuế lột vật như thuế màn thuế biển thuế vãi và thuế vân - vân.
6. Công chức được hạn đãi xứng đáng với tài năng của mọi người.
7. Dân ông dân bà được ngang quyền về mọi mặt chính-trị, kinh tế, văn hoá vân-vân, việc ngang dân ông, lĩnh lương ngang với dân ông.
8. Binh lính sẽ trọng đãi vì cuộc giữ gìn tổ quốc.
9. Người già và kẻ tàn tật sẽ được giúp đỡ.
10. Kẻ cơ sinh sẽ được nhà nước giúp đỡ săn sóc và bảo hộ.

Việt - Nam độc lập
Đồng minh (Việt-minh)

The ten-point domestic policy
of the Viet Minh Government.

1. Abolition of the poll tax which was required by imperialists; new taxation very light and just. Freedom of belief and freedom of assembly;
2. Every peasant will have ricefields to cultivate and sufficient help to be prosperous in agriculture;
3. Eight-hour day for workers with sufficient salary for their families;
4. Obligatory schooling: State aid for all children.
5. Free commerce for all citizens, abolition of miscellaneous taxes like sea tax, streetside tax, market tax and so forth;
6. Civil servants will receive worthy remuneration according to their talents;
7. Women are equal to men in every field, political, economic as well as cultural; equal pay for equal work;
8. Soldiers will be highly esteemed for the defense of the Fatherland;
9. The old and the sick will be given help;
10. Infants will receive care, aid and protection from the State.

VIET-NAM Doc Lap Dong Minh
(Viet Minh).

The aforementioned handbill was widely distributed and posted in every prominent place after the defeat of the Japanese. ²⁶

For the Vietnamese people who had suffered so long from oppression and misery, and whose lives were constantly threatened by political abuse as well as periodic natural calamities, it was extremely difficult to resist such a tempting program. To sophisticated Western observers, the programme appeared politically naive or even "stupid", but it must be borne in mind that to the inexperienced Vietnamese public, subjected for many centuries to the system of absolute monarchy, democracy was completely novel and politics a rare luxury. The Viet Minh domestic program, on the other hand, promised to satisfy those aspirations for freedom and security that lie deep in the heart of every Vietnamese. Little wonder that in the exciting atmosphere of sudden change during August 1945, strongly motivated, on the one hand, by the noble cause of national independence and freedom, and on the other, by self-interest, the Vietnamese masses excitedly welcomed the ten-point policy of the Viet-Minh and, explicitly or tacitly, embraced the Cuu Quoc organisations without weighing the issue of communism at all.

Towards the end of August 1945, the official programme of the Viet Minh with more details was published in the Dân Báo (People's Newspaper) (a

copy from Dân Báo n.687, 28 August 1945, is included in the Appendix: B4). If this is compared with the ten-point program of 1930-31 (See the Appendix B2) some important changes are at once discernible. Besides adjusting the slogans to the political situation of the moment (the French had already been ousted by the Japanese and no longer exercised authority), the Viet Minh decided to broaden the national united front for independence by incorporating tradesmen, intellectuals, religious elements, the bourgeoisie and even some landlords into the Cuu Quoc organisations.²⁷ To attract the bourgeoisie and the landlords, the Viet Minh deemed it necessary temporarily to put aside the slogan: "To confiscate landlords' land", and to put forth, instead, the slogans: "To confiscate imperialists' and traitors' land" and "to reduce land rent and interest rates". The right to private ownership and to free enterprise was also made clear in the longer form of the Viet Minh Program:

Policy toward the various social strata:

1. The bourgeois having the right to free enterprise are encouraged and helped by the government to develop the necessary industries;
2. The landowners' right of private ownership is respected; they are encouraged to exploit uncultivated land.
3. The tradesmen are free to travel and to carry on their business since commerce is guaranteed by law. The miscellaneous taxes are eliminated.²⁸

Likewise, to obtain the support of the Buddhists, Catholics and other religious elements, the Communist leaders felt it more effective to drop the slogan "To confiscate the land of the Churches".²⁹ They took pains to deny any anti-religious policy and to emphasize, instead, the religious freedom mentioned in the second slogan of the ten-point policy of the Viet Minh Front.

This policy of subordinating "for the moment" all social and class questions to the national issue of Independence and Freedom was later acknowledged to have been an "extremely flexible tactic enabling the different classes of enemy to be identified and concentrating the attack against the main enemy alone". Thus it became possible to rally the maximum force for the declared purpose of saving the country and liberating the nation.³⁰

Furthermore, the Communist policy and tactics were based on the economic conditions existing in Viet Nam at that time. In this field, the developments which most profoundly affected the Vietnamese people during 1945 were the terrible famine brought on by poor harvests and the policy of rice requisition by the colonial authorities. The undeclared communists availed themselves of the opportunity this offered to issue the slogan cướp gạo cứu đói (seize rice to relieve hunger), led people in demonstrations demanding "rice and rights" and used "honour units"

(meaning assassination squads, parts of the Armed Propaganda Unit) to warn notables, civil servants, and rich people not to exploit the rice shortage. By mixing economic slogans with political ones and military force with political activities, the Viet Minh tried to create for themselves the image of a patriotic and powerful organisation which championed the vital and immediate interests of the masses. ³¹

The Viet Minh had shown themselves to be skilful organisers astute propagandists, and adept at mobilizing the masses to serve their own purposes; now they showed they also possessed a well developed sense of timing. Their rare combination of political crafts was publicly demonstrated for the first time in Hanoi on 17 August 1945, when a meeting of the Civil Servants' Association, organised in support of the Tran Trong Kim Government (under Bao Dai in Hue), was transformed into a public demonstration in favour of the Viet Minh. ³²

The period was one of complete confusion. The French had been overthrown by the Japanese several months before but the victory of the Allied Forces over Japan revived their all but abandoned hope of somehow regaining colonial power in Indochina. The power of the Japanese troops in Indochina remained unimpaired but was immobilized by their Emperor's official surrender to the Allied Powers. In Viet Nam

Tran Trong Kim's Cabinet had just resigned and the Emperor Bao Dai was seeking more able men to cope with the difficult situation. The moment cried out for strong national leadership,

At the very moment, those Viet Minh members who had infiltrated Hanoi and the Civil Servants' Association, cleverly converted the latter's public meeting into a massive and noisy welcoming party for the Viet Minh by employing a flood of political novelties: anti-fascist, independence and democratic slogans, Viet Minh handbills, posters and signboards, Viet Minh cadres carrying guns, firing shots in the air, and above all, innumerable Viet Minh flags with bright red background and golden star. The whole operation provided ample evidence of a superb organisation with strong leadership. The whole city was stunned and people were deeply impressed if not altogether enthusiastic.

This overwhelming show of force opened the way for more public propaganda and "armed demonstrations" of which the largest one, on 19 August 1945, led a mob to occupy the Bắc Bộ Phủ (North Regional Government Office), Tòa Đôc Lý (City Hall) and other public buildings, including the headquarters of the Security Guard (similar to City Police and officially under the Japanese control). All was successfully organised and directed by the Viet Minh Front without any apparent opposition.

Three days earlier, the first "Liberation Troops", under the command of Vo Nguyen Giap, had solemnly departed from Tan Trao to liberate Thai Nguyen town. It was reported that on 19 August 1945, at 1:00 p.m., they had barely reached Thinh Dan village, west of Thai Nguyen, when the people of Hanoi rose to seize power in the capital! ³³ There was general consternation at the appearance of two platoons called "Viet Minh Liberation troops" marching "một, hai! một, hai!" (one, two! one, two!) through some of the most populous quarters of Hanoi. Though still poorly dressed and ill equipped these men were the first Vietnamese troops not commanded by foreign officers, to march in Hanoi since the end of the 19th century! In a country which sets as much store by symbol and myth as Viet Nam does, the effect upon the masses, was very great indeed and its psychological impact was heightened continuously by Viet Minh inspired rumours.

In an atmosphere of stunned admiration and excitement, the Viet Minh Liberation Committee was installed by acclamation from a huge and anonymous crowd. Exploiting this unchallengeable demonstration of popular support, the Liberation Committee acting "in the name of the people", despatched a telegram to Emperor Bao Dai to demand his abdication in favour of the "People's Revolutionery Committee" which was formed by the Viet Minh Front.

Following the example of Phan Ke Toai,³⁴ the former representative of the Emperor in the North, "a group of (unnamed) intellectuals" reportedly cabled advice to Bao Dai to accept the demand of the Viet Minh, "a new and powerful Party having some troops and enjoying the support of the Allied Countries".

On 23 August 1945, the Viet Minh committee in Hue issued an ultimatum to the Emperor Bao Dai demanding that he notify the Japanese authorities that the Royal Court of Hue "had transferred national power to the revolutionary government" and that he assign the Royal Guard Battalion (đội lính khố vàng) with their arms to the revolutionary government.³⁵ The deadline for Bao Dai's reply was 13:30 on the same day and, as the hour approached, large crowds of demonstrators summoned by the Viet Minh were marched around the imperial citadel shouting revolutionary slogans.

Moreover, while the royal court was occupied with painful deliberations over the demand on the part of the revolutionaries, stupefying news reached the royal palace: two prominent mandarins, Phạm Quỳnh and Ngô Đình Khôi, who had once served Bao Dai, had been seized and killed by the revolutionaries! Overwhelmed by a wave of shock and apprehension, the Emperor and his Council rapidly decided that he should "transfer authority to the Republican Democratic Government" and be pleased to become a simple citizen

of an Independent country".

Predictably all Viet Minh newspapers and other media endeavoured to create the impression that Bao Dai "had voluntarily abdicated his throne, preferring national independence to his royal throne". However, Hoàng Trung Thực (meaning Truthful) was probably more accurate in his statement concerning Bao Dai's abdication, published in Hanoi twenty two years after the historical event:

Bao Dai's abdication was not, indeed, a truly "voluntary" act performed of his own free will; it was rather revolutionary force applied through a flexible tactic that forced the king to choose between his throne and his own head. 36

After Bao Dai had expressed his consent in order to save his own life, three Viet Minh representatives (Nguyễn Lương Bằng, Trần Huy Liệu and Cù Huy Cận) were sent to the royal capital to witness the abdication ceremony on 30 August 1945, and to bring the Ấn Vàng, Kiểm Ngọc (Gold Seal and Jade Sword), symbols of the royal authority, to Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Minh leader who had quietly taken over the reins of authority in Hanoi.

At the same time, the new provisional Government headed by Ho Chi Minh, issued a proclamation to introduce an "enlarged Cabinet" with members carefully selected from several different groupings so as to create the impression of a truly representative national united Government. Emphasizing again the twin

themes of independence and freedom, the veteran revolutionaries appealed persuasively for support and allegiance to the new government:

Dear compatriots!

The National Assembly met on 16 and 17 August 1945 and elected the Viet Nam National Liberation Committee, which is now the People's Provisional Government, to lead our people in the struggle for independence.-

On the historic date, 19 August 1945, political power over the whole country passed into the hands of the Viet Nam Liberation Committee. Solidly unified into a single bloc, the whole nation gave full support to the new Government. Bowing to the will of our people, the king agreed to abdicate and to transfer power to the People's Provisional Government. The National Salvation Movement swelled tremendously and all strata of the people have been exceedingly enthusiastic....

...In order to make the Provisional Government fully representative of the national united front, the National Liberation Committee, following the order of President Ho Chi Minh, has decided to reform itself by inviting some additional personalities to share with the Government the heavy responsibility entrusted by the people.

The Provisional Government is not a government of the Viet Minh front as it is wrongly understood by some to be, nor is it a government formed from representatives of political parties. It is rather a Government of National Unity to lead the whole country.

...Let the whole nation close ranks under our national flag and give full support to the Provisional Government in order to win freedom, independence and restoration for our beloved Fatherland for so long shattered by the enemy. Our national struggle for independence, freedom, and happiness still continues. Our cause of national liberation still encounters many obstacles. Let the whole nation eagerly follow the order of the Government and struggle at the cost of any sacrifice for the preservation of our complete independence.

Our slogans for this period are:

Unite the whole nation!
Fight for complete
independence!

...United in the fight, we shall win. 37

The French had submitted to the Japanese, who in turn surrendered to the Allied Powers; Tran Trong Kim's Cabinet had resigned, and Emperor Bao Dai abdicated. At this time of unprecedented confusion, only one fact emerged clearly, that a political vacuum existed, and people longed for strong leadership, even praying for some national hero, some messiah. At that precise moment, the Viet Minh leaders stepped forward officially to declare to the Vietnamese and to all nations of the world that they themselves, under the inspired leadand independencehi Minh, had fought for and won freedom and independence for Viet Nam.

The Declaration of Independence

While the Allied Forces were drawing up plans to disarm the Japanese troops in South East Asia, the Viet Minh Front embarked on a campaign to seize local political power as soon as the news of Japan's surrender to the Allies reached it. Viet Minh strategy was quickly to set up a Provisional Central Government in Hanoi and to proclaim the independence of the country so that upon their arrival in Viet Nam, the Allies' representatives would be confronted by a fait accompli.³⁸

Moreover, the Viet Minh realized that, at the end of the Second World War, any government in South East Asia, hoping to survive, must secure the support, or at least the approval, of the Allied Nations headed by the United States of America. For the Vietnamese to win such approval, it was necessary to create the impression that the new state of Viet Nam was founded on the solid basis of that freedom so long cherished by Americans and the other peoples opposing the Fascists during the Second World War.

Ho Chi Minh, therefore, opened the Declaration of Independence with a quotation from the Declaration of the United States of America:

All men are created equal.
They are endowed by their Creator
with certain inalienable rights,
among these are Life, Liberty and
the pursuit of Happiness.

Relating that American statement to the case of Viet Nam, Ho explained:

In a broader sense, this means:
All the peoples on the earth are
equal from birth, all the peoples
have the right of Life, of Happiness and Freedom. 39

That related quotation was intended to identify Viet Nam with America, Vietnamese independence with American independence, and thus to counter in advance any objection which the United States or Allied authorities might raise against the new government of Viet Nam. It would also serve to reassure the Vietnamese people and the Free World that Ho Chi Minh's Government would not prove to be Communist in nature, since he had indirectly referred to the authority of God by using the term "Creator" at the very beginning of his proclamation.

But the French Government appeared very likely to insist on the restoration of its former authority over Viet Nam and Indochina. To weaken such claims and to reduce the effectiveness of any political and diplomatic manoeuvring on the part of France, Ho presented another "undeniable truth" taken from the Declaration of the French Revolution:

All men are born free with equal
rights, and must always remain
free and have equal rights. 40

This noble principle, cherished by every Frenchman from childhood, was here cited in stark contrast

to a long catalogue of alleged French crimes against humanity and justice. If the statement of noble principle disarmed the French, the list of accusations following it certainly aroused the anger and hatred of the Vietnamese, including the national Bourgeoisie whose injustices suffered at the hands of the French colonial authorities, were singled out for special mention. And, naturally, the Vietnamese heartily applauded their revolutionary leader who posed as a brave champion of their vital rights.

Selecting his word with all the care of an eminent jurist, Ho avoided indiscriminate condemnation of France as such, for he hoped, and indeed needed, to win the support of some sections of the French people. So, vehemently, but with much discretion and shrewdness, Ho indicted "the French imperialists" for having betrayed not only the Vietnamese people, but also the Allied Nations:

In the Autumn of 1940, when the Japanese fascists violated Indo-china's territory to establish new bases against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their knees to offer our country to the Japanese. 41

This followed very closely the lines of argument advanced by the French Liberation Movement (headed by De Gaulle) against the policy of Marshall Pétain and Admiral Decoux. Hence, the anti-Vichy elements as well as every Frenchman who did not wish to risk identification as an "imperialist" or a

"coward", found it politic to accept the statements of the Vietnamese Liberation leader. 42

Ho's argument, indeed, went further: since the French colonial administrators, by their flight or surrender, "had twice sold Viet Nam to the Japanese", they had de facto forfeited France's status of "protector":

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

.....
The truth is that we have seized our independence from the Japanese and not from the French. 43

Anticipating the traditional objection on the basis of legitimate authority, the experienced professional revolutionary calmly mentioned the fact of Emperor Bao Dai's abdication which the Viet Minh Front had obtained through cleverly applied pressure a few days before. Ho, then, presented an entirely predictable conclusion concerning "a nation that has fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists", and a fait accompli:

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

.....
Viet Nam has the right to be a free and independent country - and in fact it is already free and independent. 44

Thus, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam was born as the fruit of what the Communists proclaimed a "National Democratic Revolution".

To convince the Vietnamese people of its "National Democratic" character, all Communist slogans and Marxist expressions were temporarily discarded from the public appeals and official notices of the Viet Minh. The terms Independence and Freedom, on the contrary, were repeated on every possible occasion (seven times each in Ho Chi Minh's appeal for general insurrection, and six times each, in the last part of his Declaration of Independence alone).

For the same purpose, on 11 November 1945, the Indochinese Communist Party had declared its own dissolution and the closure of Cờ Giải Phóng (Liberation Banner), its official organ.⁴⁵ Likewise, General Elections were held and a "very democratic" Constitution was presented and approved in 1946 (only to be suspended the next day without ever being promulgated) in order to avoid unfavourable reaction from the Vietnamese people and other nations who disapproved Communism as a totalitarian regime.

Truong Chinh's explanation of the "voluntary dissolution" shed a most revealing light on those political manoeuvres:

The voluntary dissolution of the Indochinese Communist Party prevents the reactionaries from slandering us and from sowing division either in our National

United Front or between the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Allied Countries. The voluntary dissolution, indeed, makes the member organisations in the Viet Minh Front believe that the Indochinese Communists are faithful to the Viet Minh program of National Salvation.... After all, such a Voluntary dissolution is not a betrayal of the Communist ideal. On the contrary, since it serves to further the work of National liberation, the dissolution of the Party is a good way to serve the Communist ideal. 46

Six years later, when the Communist Party emerged under the new name of the "Viet Nam Workers' Party" (February 1951), Ho Chi Minh candidly explained its previous withdrawal into the underground as a "painful measure" to pave the way for the Party "to give discreet and more effective leadership":

The greatest concern was evinced about the Party's proclamation of voluntary dissolution. But, in reality, it went underground. And though underground, the Party continued to lead the administration and the people. We recognise that the Party's declaration of dissolution (rather an immersion, indeed) was a good measure. 47

Those "good measures", Ho jubilantly hailed as basic elements of success:

Thanks to the clear-sighted and resolute leadership of our Party, and the solidarity and enthusiasm

of the entire people within the Viet Minh Front, the August Revolution was successful. 48

The Viet Minh revolution was not, in fact, an arduous military revolution like the American, French or Russian Revolutions, because the abrupt end of the Second World War in the Pacific had created a political vacuum in Viet Nam. The French troops had been disarmed by the Japanese who, in their turn were defeated by the Allied Forces after atomic bombs had been dropped in Hiroshima and Nagazaki. Having no military force whatsoever, the Royal Cabinet of Bao Dai was confused, intimidated, and disorientated by rumour, pressure and "armed propaganda" on the part of the Viet Minh. The Royal Court of Hue fell into despair when the Emperor's appeal to the Allied Powers was met with ominous silence, and finally surrendered its national authority. 49 Political power thus became "a ripe fruit dropping from its withered stem" - to use Truong Chinh's words -, and fell into the hands of the Viet Minh leaders who had been so trained as to make the right move at the right moment. 50

So, the Viet Minh power seizure has become a "successful revolution". It was a self-proclaimed champion of national independence just as the American revolution of 1775 was, and of those democratic freedoms which the French had demanded in 1789. At the same time it was the instrument by which an undeclared

proletarian party seized governmental power as had happened in the Soviet revolution in 1917. This curious combination of different revolutionary models was later baptized under the innocent and attractive name of "national democratic revolution".

Indeed, that "first-stage revolution" was led to success by those skilful Communist leaders who knew how to turn their Viet Minh organisation into a United Front for National Salvation to rally the whole people under a single banner, not of Communism but rather of Independence and Freedom.

As early as 1930, Ho Chi Minh had advised his comrades to aim first at national liberation rather than to talk about international proletarianism, and prescribed the reawakening of patriotism in each compatriot as the necessary prerequisite of winning popular support.⁵¹ That prudent prescription was well observed in 1945 and the importance and efficiency of the Doc lap, Tu do theme was proudly acknowledged in the latest official history of the Communist Party:

The Viet Minh programme so coincided with our people's yearning for independence and freedom that all Vietnamese who loved their country spared no effort to implement such a program. Consequently, the Viet Minh Organisation was developing fast.⁵²

Thereupon, Ho Chi Minh himself contributed a most revealing comment in relating that practical and

successful strategy to the achievement of the Party's ultimate goal:

The wider the Viet Minh Front developed, the deeper our Party grew... Because the Party's policies were correct and were implemented in a timely and flexible way..., a political party only fifteen years of age has led the revolution to success, and seized power throughout the country. 53

Thus, what the Viet Minh Revolution seemed to be, history has proved since, became incalculably more important than what it was in reality. Cuu Quoc organisations and the theme of Doc lap, Tu do played the key role in bringing success to the Communist Party.

In broader terms, the banner of National Salvation, Independence, and Freedom is only one aspect of the United Front tactic. Another application of this far-reaching strategy is the Communist Alliance policy which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Footnotes for Chapter III

1. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi (Hanoi: Su That, 1958), vol.I, pp.9-11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. This song summarized the political platform of the Indochinese Communist Party and adapted it to the Anti-imperialist United Front. Since it revealed the Communist character of the Front, it was not popularised in the whole. The complete text is reproduced in the Appendix A2.
6. This song was heard after the seizure of power in August 1945.
7. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., pp.9-11.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Truong Chinh, "March ahead Under the Party's Banner", Speech delivered in 1966 on the 30th anniversary of the founding of the "Indochinese Communist Party, now the Viet Nam Workers' Party, later published in booklet under the same title: March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, (Hanoi, 1963), p.48
11. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960.)
12. "Ca Công Nhân", Thơ Hồ Chủ Tịch (Hanoi: Văn học, 1967), pp.11-12

13. "Ca Dân Cày", Ibid., pp.13-14 .
14. "Ca Binh Lĩnh", Ibid., pp.15-16 .
15. "Kêu Gọi Phụ Nữ", Ibid., pp.17-18 .
16. "Kêu Gọi Thiếu Nhi", Ibid., pp.19-20 .
17. "Trẻ Chân Trâu", Ibid., pp.21-22 .
18. "Bài Ca Sỏi Chì", Ibid., pp.27-28 .
19. From a Viet Minh underground paper (1944-45).
20. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., pp.12-13
21. Ibid., pp.14-15. Italics added.
22. Trần Huy Liệu, Lịch sử tám mươi năm chống Pháp (Hanoi, 1961), vol.II, 2nd part, p.156
23. Ibid. cf. The Vietnamese texts ~~in~~ included in the Appendix: B2-B4 .
24. Ibid., p.157
25. Ibid.
26. It is interesting to note how extremely difficult it is today to find a copy of this "Ten-point policy toward the Vietnamese people". The fact that publications from Hanoi never reproduced nor quoted from this once widely publicized program is highly significant and may be explained by the obvious and very embarrassing disparity between political promises and unpleasant reality. It is rewarding to compare this document, recently found after an arduous search by the author, with other programs and slogans issued by the Communists Propaganda since 1929 (See Appendix B).

27. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, II, p.148: Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, pp.67-68; also ;.34-35; 50-52; 75; 101; Cf. Truong Chinh, Cách Mạng Tháng Tám, (Hanoi; 1955), p.21; Truong Chinh, March Ahead under the Party's Banner, (Hanoi: 1963), pp.33-35, 48-49, 85-92, 95-101; Truong Chinh, Forward Along the Path Charted by K.Marx, (Hanoi, 1969), pp.43-47; Brève Histoire du Parti des Travailleurs du Viet Nam, (Hanoi, 1970), pp.31-34,,37, 40.
28. See "Chủ trường và chính sách...Việt Minh", in Appendix B⁴, Part D.
29. Brève Histoire du Parti..., p.168.
30. Ibid., p.31; Thirty Years of Struggle, p.70. Italics added.
31. Thirty years of Struggle of the Party, pp.91-100.
32. Eyewitness' accounts of this event can be found in: Doan Thiem, Những ngày chưa quên, (Saigon: Nam Chi Tung Thu, 1967), pp. 47-48; Nghiem Ke To, Viet Nam Máu Lửa, (Saigon: Mai Linh, 1954), pp. 32 ff. See also: Le Tan Tien, Lịch sử của Đảng, p.42
33. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., pp.158, 160, 177. Reportedly, the liberation troops started fighting on 20 August 1945 while some Viet Minh delegates negotiated with the Japanese but "there was no decisive result". The Japanese did not leave Thai Nguyen until 28 August 1945 (Ibid., pp.177 and 198).
34. It was learned later that Toai's son, Phan Ke An, had been a Viet Minh member and was contributing much pressure upon his father and other counsellors of Bao Dai.
35. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., pp.185 and 199.

36. Hoang Trung Thúc, "Tìm hiểu phương châm 'thêm bạn bớt thù' trong thời kỳ cách mạng tháng tám", Nghiên cứu lịch sử, (Hanoi: No. 101 August 1967), p. 15.
37. "Tuyên Cáo về việc thành lập Chính-phủ lâm-thời", Việt Nam Dân Quốc Công Báo (Viet Nam Official Journal), Year I, No. 1 (Hanoi: 29 September 1945), p. 2.
38. Trần Huy Liệu, "Vấn đề thời cơ..." (The question of opportunity and timing), Doc Lap, No. 709, Hanoi: 12 August 1965, p. 1.
39. Ho Chi Minh, Những lời kêu gọi, I, pp. 16-18
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., Italics added.
42. In the Communist terminology, this is a "full use of the contradictions in the enemy's tanks".
43. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., pp. 17-18
44. Ibid., Italics added.
45. Since the Indochinese Marxist Studies' Association and Su That (Truth) newspaper emerged to continue the work of the I.C.P. and the Cờ Giải Phóng, some intellectuals whispered to one another a paraphrased version of a common saying in Russia: "No truth in the Liberation, no liberation in the Truth".
46. Trương Chinh "Mười lăm năm tranh đấu giải phóng dân tộc", Cờ Giải Phóng, No. 33 (18 November 1945). Italics added.
47. Ho Chi Minh, "Political report read at the Second National Congress of the Viet Nam Workers Party held in February 1951". Italics added.

48. Ibid.
49. This was confirmed in private interviews with Bao Dai and some of his Cabinet Ministers of that period.
50. Truong Chinh, "Cach mang hay dao chinh", Co Giai Phong, No. 16, (Hanoi, 12 September 1945);
Xuan Thuy, "La Politique de Front national uni",
La Nouvelle Critique (Paris, March 1962).
pp. 83-84.
51. Nguyễn Lương Bằng, "Mes rencontres avec
L'Oncle Ho", Récits de la résistance Vietnamiennne
(Paris: Francois Maspero 1966), p.17.
52. Bốn mươi năm hoạt động của Đảng (Hanoi: Su That,
1970), p.30.
53. Ho Chi Minh, "Political Report... February 1951".
Italics added.

Chapter IV

The Unity Theme and the Alliance Policy.

Addressing a special training session of Communist members in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh asserted that in 1945 all over the country the Communist Party had only about five thousand adherents.¹ This small minority, however, had rallied and led the whole nation to achieve the August Revolution in that year because, according to Ho, the correct policies of the Communist Party were carried out opportunely and very flexibly. One of the most important of these in ensuring Communist success was the alliance policy which so well combined both elements, opportunity and flexibility.

Section One: The formulation of the alliance policy.

The starting point of the Communist theory of revolution is always the recognition of contradictions between social classes. The Indo-chinese Communist Party, not long after its foundation,² has issued in October 1930, a Political Programme which underlined the basic contradiction between the workers, peasants and miserable labouring people on one side, and the imperialists, feudalists and bourgeois on the other.

During the Nghe Tinh Soviet Movement (1930-31) the Communist Committee of Central Viet Nam pointed out Trí, Phú, Địa, Hào (intellectuals, rich men, landlords, and notabilities) as enemies of the revolution and agents of French imperialism. Thus, the Communist insurrection of 1930-31 was trying to overthrow the French colonial rule and the royal administration, to set up local soviets

in the advance to the establishment of a soviet government, to attack several categories (Trí, Phú, Đĩa, Hào) among the Vietnamese people, to confiscate the properties of the landlords, rich men, churches,³ to redistribute the land, and even to suppress "superstitions"⁴ (this communist pejorative term includes in fact, any kind of religion and belief).

As a result, the Nghe Tinh Soviet Movement was doomed to failure because the revolutionary force did not measure up to the established power of so many enemies attacked at the same time.

The Comintern later criticized this whole movement of several heavy mistakes. There was, at first, a detrimental division among the workers when the "blue workers" (the technicians dressed in blue) were discriminated against the "brown workers" (the non-skilled workers dressed in brown like the factory cleaners, for example). Besides, the attack against the national bourgeoisie and the churches, the diffidence against the petite bourgeoisie and the incorrect slogan "to wipe out Trí, Phú, Đĩa, Hào" only helped to create more enemies, whereas the "number one principal foe" was not specified. Moreover, the overemphasis of proletarian internationalism at the expense of nationalist sentiments, and the lack of a national united front constituted the main weakness.⁵

Drawing a lesson of experience from that disastrous failure, the Indochinese Communist Party took considerable pains to develop a very flexible policy with the purpose of having "more friends and less foes", namely the alliance policy. This policy is fundamentally

based on the principle of unity of action which consists in selecting a goal common to various groups and then focusing all the available forces on its achievement.

Throughout many years of study, practice, revision and improvement, the Communist leaders fostered the progressive evolution of that policy into a sophisticated and highly effective "revolutionary strategy". It was later defined by the outstanding Marxist theoretician Truong Chinh as:

the science of discerning the enemy,
the driving force of the revolution
and the allies of the working class
at each strategic stage or in each
period of strategic significance,
in order to muster all the revolu-
tionary forces, win over allies
and isolate the enemy to overcome
him.

In determining the target of the struggle, the Communist Party singled out the principal enemy to overthrow at each given stage of the revolution. Generally, the double enemy of the people's national democratic revolution has been named "aggressive imperialism" and "its agent and support, the ~~feudal~~ landlord class". But the specific imperialist enemy was "French colonialism" in the 1930-36 period, the "French fascists and the French colonial reactionaries in Indochina" during the 1936-39 period, the "Japanese and French fascists" from August 1940 to March 1945.⁷ After the Japanese coup d'état of the 9th of March 1945, "the Japanese fascists became the main, immediate and sole enemy of the Indo-

chinese peoples".⁸

During the resistance war against the French troops (1945-54), the main enemy was again the "French colonialists", with which were coupled their supporters, the "American interventionists". Since 1954, the principal enemy has been the "American imperialist aggressors", supported by the so called "lackeys" or "puppet government in the South".

Likewise, the Vietnamese feudal landlord class was itself subdivided and the special section selected to be eliminated in each successive phase were first the king, the mandarins, and local notabilities during the 1930-39 period, the "traitorous feudalists, puppets in the service of the Japanese and French fascists" from 1940-45, the "pro-Japanese reactionaries" from the 9th of March 1945 to the August revolution, then the "pro-Chiang Kai shek feudalists", the "pro-French puppets" and later the "pro-American puppet administration in South Viet-Nam". Attached to the feudal landlord class was the comprador bourgeoisie as a secondary enemy.⁹

After discerning the enemies - general and specific, principal and secondary, the Communist strategist applied the Marxist-Leninist method to analyse the attitudes of the different classes in the Vietnamese society (during the French rule) towards the revolutionary tasks against imperialism and feudalism. On the basis of such analysis the revolutionary forces in Viet-Nam were grouped in four classes: the peasantry, the working class, the petite bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. Each of these classes were studied and evaluated carefully.

The peasantry, first of all, represented an overwhelming majority (90%) of the Vietnamese population and as valued for its revolutionary nature:

Short of land, the peasants, especially the poor and landless, peasants, strongly opposed the imperialists and the feudalists. The liberation wars in Vietnamese history are basically peasant wars. In the national people's democratic revolution, the peasants are the biggest force of the revolution and the most reliable ally of the working class. 10

But from the Marxist viewpoint, the peasantry was not homogeneous and lacked the adequate class consciousness. Being rather inclined to individual production and "having the tendency to spontaneous capitalist development", it did not have a social revolutionary ideology. 11

The working class, on the other hand, was highly esteemed for its qualities of leadership:

The workers are toiling people with no means of production, having to sell their labour power to live and being exploited by means of the wage system. They work in factories and live in the towns and industrial areas. They represent the most progressive productive force of the society. For these reasons the working class is the most revolutionary force whose political consciousness, organisational ability, discipline and creativeness are higher than those of other classes. 12

With those revolutionary virtues and other wholesome characteristics, the workers, though small in number, were

assigned to lead the revolution. Thus the workers and the peasants formed the driving forces of the revolution. This basic tenet was stated in the 1930 Political Thesis of the Indochinese Communist Party, and philosophically explained even earlier (1926) by Ho Chi Minh, then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, the real father of Communism in Viet-Nam:

As oppression breeds revolution, those who are most heavily oppressed will have greater determination in their revolution. In the past capitalism was oppressed by feudalism and it carried out a revolution. Now capitalism is oppressing the workers and the peasants; hence the workers and the peasants will be the main forces of the revolution.

These are the reasons:

1. the workers and the peasants are more heavily oppressed;
2. the workers and the peasants are united, therefore, they have the greatest strength;
3. they are already poor: if defeated they would have nothing to lose but their miserable lives; if they win, they will capture the entire world. 13

Turning to the other classes, the Marxist analyst described the petite bourgeoisie as including craftsmen, itinerant and small traders, owners of small industries, civil servants, students and intellectuals. These elements suffered more or less oppression and exploitation from the imperialists and the feudalists. Their life being generally unstable and always threatened by inflation, bankruptcy and unemployment, those people

ordinarily participated in the revolution with great enthusiasm. Moreover, being more cultured than the other classes and more readily carried by the sentiments of patriotism, they very often started the struggle and proved to be very articulate and highly effective in the mobilisation of the masses. But their weakness consisted in their vacillating when confronted by enormous difficulties or reactionary repression. Hence, the petite bourgeoisie should not lead the revolution but it could be a reliable ally of the working class. ¹⁴

The final class on the list of revolutionary forces had an ambivalent description:

The national bourgeoisie had a two-sided nature: on the one hand, it was opposing the imperialists and the feudalists, desiring national independence and democratic freedoms, but on the other hand, its attitude was unstable, wavering and reluctant. ¹⁵

.....
Notwithstanding this, the national bourgeoisie was an ally in the national people's democratic revolution, unlike the comprador bourgeoisie which had been throughout an anti-revolutionary force in our country. ¹⁶

Since revolution is the work of the broad masses and not of the Communist Party alone or the working class itself, the Communist strove to win more cooperation and at least to neutralize any opposition there might exist, This is exactly the purpose of the communist alliance policy as explained by Truong Chinh:

On the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, we called for unity among the entire people,

uniting with whomever we can unite with, converting whomever we can convert, neutralising whomever we cannot convert; thus we gathered together all national and democratic forces and gained allies, however small, unstable or temporary, for the purpose of depriving the enemy of his supporters and winning more friends for ourselves, so as to have additional strength to overthrow the enemy. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that the driving force of the Vietnamese revolution comes from the workers and the peasants, and its leader is the working class. 17

The alliance may be long lasting like the worker-peasant fusion, or temporary in a given stage and for a specific purpose like a league of several political parties before the seize-power. In any case, it must have a clear cut political programme and be placed under the close and tight control of a Marxist-Leninist party.¹⁸

The programme should satisfy the purposes of various political parties or popular organisations and appeal to the desires and aspirations of the broadest mass possible where the struggle takes place. This is the minimum programme of the Communist Party but accepted by its allies as a common programme, and all forces should be united to achieve it. On the other hand, it is vital that the Communist Party maintains its strong and exclusive leadership while preserving its own and long-term programme. This important detail was stressed in unambiguous terms by Truong Chinh:

The Party has constantly to preserve its independent nature, possess a programme

of its own (maximum programme) so as to ensure its revolutionary leadership based on the worker-peasant alliance. This leadership, the Party must not share with any party whatsoever, and must absolutely not allow the national bourgeoisie to lead the national united front. 19

Political alliance should be established with political parties, cultural groups, patriotic personalities, religious organisations, minority peoples, and progressive elements. And this not only at home but also abroad. The support of the working class and the people of the socialist countries, and the oppressed nations is always necessary for the success of revolution. Furthermore, a distinction should be made between the imperialists who invaded or oppressed the Vietnamese and their people who loved peace and respected human rights. Such a delicate distinction could lead the way to other useful alliances so as to weaken the enemy and strengthen the united front in Viet-Nam. Thus, in justifying his agreements with French authorities, Ho Chi Minh once quoted Lenin as saying that "even if a compromise with bandits was advantageous to the revolution, he would do it." 20

Section Two: The Alliance Policy in Action.

Some forty years ago, the principle of united action was invoked, and from the alliance of the three existing Communist organisations (The Indochinese Communist Party started by a group of North Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth delegates in 1929, the Annam Communist Party founded in Central Viet-Nam, and the Indochinese Communist League formed by members of the Tan Viet Revolutionary

Party) was born the Viet-Nam Communist Party. ²¹

Later, in October 1930, it was renamed Indochinese Communist Party by the Comintern, obviously to underline the alliance between Viet-Nam, Cambodia, Laos and possibly to facilitate the use of secret revolutionary bases or even to reclaim some disputed territories in the other parts of Indochina.

¹⁰ Alliance of social classes.

The basic alliance advocated from the very beginning (1929-1930) was the long term alliance of Công-Nông-Binh (Workers-Peasants-Soldiers) as stated in very early slogans:

Công, nông, binh, Unite! Follow the October Revolution of Russia! Establish a Công-nông-binh soviet Government of Indochina! ²²

This alliance, first practised in Russia, was explained to the Vietnamese people in Tranh Đấu (The Struggle), the first lithographic paper published by the Viet-Nam Communist Party (the special issue of the 1 November 1930, on the October Revolution):

On the 7 November ... Russian proletarians allied themselves with peasants and soldiers to overthrow the capitalist government and establish the proletarian dictatorship.

... For the purpose of building a communist society. ²³

In 1930, the Communists appealed for the cooperation of the Vietnamese soldiers towards a successful insurrection against "the imperialists, the royal government, the mandarins and the landlords":

These few months, workers, peasants and soldiers all over our country, fed up with so much misery, have enthusiastically mobilised our people for strikes, demonstrations and violent opposition. Unfortunately the imperialists, the mandarins and landlords, have ordered our brother soldiers to repress, even to shoot and kill the protesters! Workers and peasants, alas!, being killed by workers and peasants!

Most of you, brother soldiers, came from among the workers and peasants... being soldiers, you have been so badly mistreated and condemned to the miserable life of "horses and buffaloes"!

Brothers, Unite to struggle together!

Demand salary increase!

Support the struggle of the workers and peasants! Long live the Công, Nông, Binh (worker-peasant-soldier) alliance. 24

The "Công-Nông-Binh Government" slogan was later replaced by another slogan, calling for a Democratic Republic. But, cooperation from soldiers was still urged in 1940-41 by special mention in the Viet Minh's handbills and Nguyen Ai Quoc's Letter from abroad, until a Liberation army was organised as an arm of the Viet Minh Front, under the direction of Vo Nguyen Giap.

In the wake of the Nghe Tinh Soviet Movement (1930-31) the coalition policy was extended to win over the middle-peasants as allies in the "common struggle", according to the instruction of the Communist party's Central Committee;

To strengthen by all means the landless and poor peasants because they are semi-proletarians in the countryside; to unite with the middle peasants because they are for the time being a big revolutionary force and a labouring force which will, together with the working class, build socialism once the state power is in the workers' hands. 25

Rich peasants must not be friends and should be a target of struggle because under the Marxist lens they were also members of the exploiting class. But to reduce the number of enemies so as to render united action more effective, they should be "neutralized" (neither friend nor enemy) or isolated for the time being. The Communist strategist was very shrewed in suggesting to the cadres that they be careful in their choice of words and tactful in their methods, so as to persuade them voluntarily to leave the political battleground for a neutral working area:

Rich peasants should not be members of the Red Peasants' Association, in particular members of the Executive Committee of this Association. But the Permanent Bureau of the Central Committee disapproves of the raising of the question of thanh lọc (purging) the Red Peasants' Association. It should only speak of chỉnh lý (re-adjusting) the Red Peasants' Association according to its principles. Explanations should be given to rich peasants to convince them that they should withdraw of their own free will from the Red Peasants' Association and shift to the mutual aid teams. 26

This clever policy of thêm bạn, bớt thù (more friends, less foes) was carried out very methodically and made more effective the "All-out campaign to promote the people to struggle for the reduction of land rent and interest rate" in the 1950's. It was moulded into emotive and attractive slogans:

Đập tan địa chủ bóc lột. (Crush the exploiting landlords).

Cô lập phú nông. (Isolate rich peasants).

Liên minh với trung nông. (Ally with the middle peasants).

Bần, Cò nông là thành phần bản bộ. (Landless and poor peasants are the basic elements).

According to the Marxist doctrine, the landlord class was the people's enemy but the Communist Party was too shrewd to fight too many enemies at the same time. It preferred to apply the tactics of "breaking chopsticks one by one". Its systematic application, Truong Chinh, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, clearly reported to the Workers' Party in Hanoi:

As far as tactics were concerned, it was necessary systematically to divide its "the landlord class ranks" into different groups; first, attack the ringleaders and powerful reactionary landlords.... win over the landlords whose interests more or less clashed with those of the imperialists, and neutralize a number of wavering landlords. We, therefore, carried out our agrarian program step by step: once we deliberately but temporarily postponed the slogan "Confiscate the landlords' land..." Even during the land reform... we subdivided

this class into several categories, and applied three different measures, namely confiscation, requisition and compulsory purchase.... 27

Thus the landlord class was divided into four categories according to their political attitudes. Those better educated landlords who had been very outstanding allied, were called nhân sĩ dân chủ (democratic personalities), those who were converted and had contributed a great deal of money or material means to the resistance war, were named địa chủ kháng chiến (resistance landlords), those who, for one reason or another, did not cooperate with the revolutionaries, were labelled địa chủ cường hào gian ác (oppressive villainous landlords or local bullies), real targets of attack. For the wavering landlords, there was reserved a relatively mild name: địa chủ thường (ordinary landlords).

To those different categories were applied different measures. In principle, "compulsory purchase" was applicable to "democratic personalities" and "resistance landlords" or even to "ordinary landlords". Actually, "compulsory purchase" as well as "voluntary offer" ²⁸ were not known in zone IV (Thanh Nghe Tinh) ²⁹ during the first phase of land reform (1953-1954). Some people, indeed, unable to pay the excessive tax imposed on them, offered their land to the government as a gift, only to find that it was not accepted. The most common measure was confiscation.

Tịch thu (confiscation) and trưng dụng (requisition) differed only semantically, the former carrying the

connotation of punishment. The Communist government, therefore, found it politic to requisition rather than to confiscate the properties of "democratic personalities" and "resistance landlords".³⁰ This was another case of persuasive use of words to ease the pains of those landlords who, after serving as allies of the revolutionary forces, found themselves later categorised as enemies of the people.

That experience of reclassification in the Communist list of friends and foes was also shared by the national bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. During the period of struggle for independence, the Communist organisation welcomed all of them because the Party needed their knowledge, skill and leadership. Hoang Quoc Viet, a member of the Central Committee, related that period of courtship quite candidly but not without some coyness:

We stressed that the petite bourgeoisie and the progressive bourgeoisie had to join the front. To this end, we assisted in setting up the Vietnamese Democratic Party which we affiliated to the front... After the liberation, in July 1946, we helped to create the Democratic Socialist Party. 31

But when the resistance war had ended in 1954 and the state power of the whole North Viet-Nam went to "the workers' hands", the Communist Party issued a new class line concerning the peasants:

To rely entirely on the poor peasants and the lower middle peasants, closely to unite with the middle peasants, to continue the restriction of the rich

peasants until the complete elimination of their economic exploitation, to carry out thought reform for rich peasants, to prevent the former landlords from "raising their heads". Resolutely to take the peasants to socialism by way of agricultural cooperation. 32

Thus the middle peasants were subdivided again and only the lower category was accepted as a reliable ally for the moment. The upper middle peasants were then treated as rich peasants and the latter as the landlords during the period of land reform. If "the landlords had been wiped out as a class" after the land reform, "which shook heaven and earth" (1953-57) ³³, the rich peasants were also to be eliminated at the completion of the agricultural cooperation. ³⁴

Beside agricultural reform, the other task in the building of socialism was the socialist transformation of industry and commerce. This forward step also required a new policy toward the national bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie in those areas.

During the struggle for national democratic revolution, the Communists had accepted the bourgeoisie as and ally for the strength of unity. But, with a new phase of revolution, that alliance had to be altered to bring the bourgeoisie to the same destiny as the landlord class. The official publication of the State Economic Department explained why the change had to be made:

If, in the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution, the contradiction between the

national bourgeoisie and the working class...was considered a secondary one, that contradiction has become, after the liberation of North Viet-Nam, a basic and very important one. If, in the people's national democratic revolution, the national capitalist economy still had a positive and progressive effect in comparison with imperialist and feudal economic systems, in the socialist revolution, that same economy has become an obstacle to the establishment of socialist economy. To solve the contradiction, it is, therefore, necessary to eliminate the sector of capitalist economy and the bourgeois class.

The definitive abolition of private capitalist ownership, the elimination of the bourgeoisie, the substitution of collective socialist ownership for capitalist and bourgeois systems, these result from a general rule used in the process of socialist revolution of any country; it is also an immutable principle of Marxism-Leninism. 35

Thus the bourgeois class was clearly scheduled for elimination. But the partition of the country decided by the Geneva Conference in 1954 and the right accorded to the Vietnamese citizens to the territory of their choice, presented a thorny problem to the Communist Government. The great majority of the bourgeoisie lived in large towns or cities where strict Communist control had not yet been established. It would be a big loss, both economic and political if those bourgeois left the North for the South. The communist regime would miss their skills and money for the economic reconstruction of North Vietnam. At the same time, any significant exodus from the North would create a bad image for the

"workers government" and would alert the bourgeoisie in the South to the dangers of the treacherous communist alliance. What a delicate situation! one which required more "flexibility and dexterity", called for another form of alliance with the bourgeois, as explained by Hoang Quoc Viet later:

...We had already discussed with the national bourgeoisie its conversion into mixed-ownership factories, that is to say, the state would develop them in accordance with national economic needs and the capital of the bourgeoisie would be put into the factories under the administration of the worker state and pay an annual 5% to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie agreed to this, so it did not leave for the South and did not make propaganda against the State. That is the reason why the national bourgeoisie of the South has no fear of the National Liberation Front in the South.... This is of major importance; it is a well-conceived policy for strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle in the South and the unity of the National Liberation Front. 36

It was, indeed, intended to "strengthen the unity of people, thus multiplying further positive elements in the revolutionary struggle of the whole nation for the purpose of "completing the national democratic revolution in the South and achieving the unification of the whole country" ³⁷ under the communist regime.

As "a benefit from the political alliance in the previous revolutionary period and from the economic relationship in the new period", the bourgeoisie were allowed to hire workers and to maintain the ownership of

materials and capitals while "the Communist State was able to use the money and the factories of the bourgeoisie".³⁸

Later, Lenin's policy of "redeeming" the means of production from the bourgeoisie was "creatively applied as a peaceful means" of eliminating private ownership and the communist strategist did not omit to quote Lenin for explanation and justification:

State capitalism in a society where the state power belongs to capitalists and state capitalism in a proletarian state are two different concepts. In the capitalist state, state capitalism is a means approved and controlled by the State to favour the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. In the proletarian state, the same means is used for the benefit of the working class to struggle against the bourgeoisie while the latter are still strong enough. ³⁹

It was not too long before the communist government made it clear to the bourgeoisie that they were dependent on the working class and that the basic contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the workers should be solved at some opportune occasion, in a proper way;

In the history of mankind, opposing contradictions between different classes of conflicting interests ordinarily should be solved by non-peaceful and non-democratic (or violent) means but the situation in North Viet-Nam is an extraordinary one. The non-peaceful and non-democratic means are only applied to the enemies, namely to the small number of bourgeois individuals who have been separated themselves from the national bourgeoisie to act against the people and neatly oppose socialism. For the national bourgeoisie in general, the Party and the people's democratic State still patiently applied the peaceful, democratic means to persuade and reform them. ⁴⁰

Thus, while carrying out the "triple policy of use, restriction and preliminary transformation", the communist authority did not hesitate to "mobilize patriotic and progressive opinions" in order to repress any "opposition from reactionary bourgeois" like the Nhân Văn - Giai phẩm affair. This so called "simultaneous policy of alliance and struggle" was intended to wipe out the "outmoded and reactionary ideas of the bourgeoisie" ⁴¹ It was reported to have a very realistic result:

The educational results of this struggle upon the bourgeoisie were such, as to make them begin to realize that opposition to the management and transformation policy of the State or participation in reactionary activities would be impossible and could lead to nowhere but a dead end. ⁴²

The communist strategists continued to assure the working class that "peaceful transformation" or political euthanasia, was simply another form of struggle and a very effective one:

Its success is amazing: private materials for production and capital for enterprise from the hands of the bourgeoisie already passed to the hands of the people in a relatively peaceful manner. ⁴³

Actually the communist State plan had been scheduled to achieve the basic transformation of industry and commerce in 1960 and determined to continue other measures, including the intensive re-education of the bourgeois, to reach the final goal of a socialist regime as promised by the Economic Department:

Such a policy served to create all the necessary conditions for the advance, when the situation is favourable, to the final achievement of total transformation of an absolute socialist system for the remnants of capitalism, and the elimination of the national bourgeoisie in North Viet-Nam. 44

Similar to this gradual transformation of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, there was also a gradual subjugation of the intellectual bourgeois carried out "opportunately and very flexibly". It is most interesting to follow such a typical evolution of the Marxist alliance through the writings of the communist leaders in North Viet-Nam.

Promoting the "New Culture Movement" in 1944, Truong Chinh, wearing the cultural hat, made a convincing appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the Vietnamese intelligentsia:

The Vietnamese New Culture Movement is an integral part of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist Revolutionary Movement of the Vietnamese people during this period. Consequently it must not be separated from the Vietnamese people's movement of national salvation and liberation led by the Indochinese Communist Party. 45

The Marxist theoretician later applied his "famous" dialectic to his promotion of Marxist alliance in cultural activities:

At the moment, the interests of the Viet-Nam people are exactly the interests of the Viet-Nam workers... The workers, then volunteer to be the pioneers heading the

national united front, fighting against French colonialism for the independence and unification of the Fatherland. For the purpose of serving the national interests in the best and the most faithful way, the Vietnamese cultural combatants should be brave enough to line up under the banner of that pioneer brigade or at least to be their close friends. 46

.....
Our cultural combatants, therefore, should adopt a right attitude, consistent with the three general principles of the New Democratic Culture, namely:

1. To be absolutely faithful to the Fatherland and the resistance war...
2. To love science and follow the guidance of the Marxist science...
3. Wholeheartedly to serve the people and stay close to the worker-peasant-soldier mass.... 47

Ho Chi Minh added the weight of his presidential appeal:

Literature and arts belong to the same front, on which you are fighters.

Like other fighters, you, in the artistic field, have your own responsibilities - to serve the Resistance, the Fatherland and the people, first and foremost the workers, peasants and soldiers.

To fulfill your tasks, you must have a firm class^{stand} and a sound ideology.... 48

Anticipating the objection of those intellectuals who found it unsavoury to submit science and art to the service of partisan politics, Uncle Ho benignly disarmed them by a patristic statement:

Some of you may think: President Ho tries to turn fine arts into a political matter.

Nothing is truer. Literature and arts, like all other activities, cannot be taken apart from the economic and political fields, but they must be included in them. 49

At the end of the resistance war and after the partition of the country, Truon Chinh appealed for more efforts in preserving unity and service:

Let us unite even more closely!
Let us strive to work for the enrichment of our national fine arts under the banner of patriotism and socialism. 50

But a large group of writers and artists were unwilling to accept this and demanded freedom from party domination. Immediately Truong Chinh issued a severe condemnation, ⁵¹ called for and obtained, of course, a merciless repression of the Nhan Van and Giai Pham group. Later, at the 1962 Conference of Writers and Artists, the same Marxist combatant bluntly told his cultural allies:

1. Writers and artists must accept that liberal arts should be under the command of politics 'to serve the policy of the Party. Writers and artists must be faithful to the Communist ideal and ceaselessly fight for the success of Communism.
2. Writers and artists... must always work to strengthen the leadership of the Party, to build up the people's confidence in the Party...
3. Writers and artists must always make the offensive against the reactionary ideas of imperialism and feudalism,

against the ideas of the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie.

4. The Communist writers and artists, like any other Communist member, must submit themselves to the command of the Party...

[A footnote :]

Those who are not yet Communist members must follow the command of their professional organisations led by the Party. 52

But a much more frightening revelation was given later in the authoritative speech of "comrade" Truong Chinh in 1968, on the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx' birth:

We must oppose every manifestation of bourgeois nationalism, the enemy of proletarian internationalism...

.....
Hence, the necessity constantly to consolidate the machine of repression of the people's Security Force, People's Tribunal...

.....
Therefore, after seizing power for the people, the communists must firmly grasp not only the machine of repression, but also the organs in charge of ideological work, information, propaganda and training, and never let bourgeois and opportunist elements hold sway to mislead public opinion and propagate anti-Party and anti-revolutionary, ideas. The communist and workers' parties in power must constantly strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. 53

2^o Alliance with the Royalists and other Political Parties

By a decision of the Indochinese Communist Party, the Democratic Front of Indochina was extended during the period 1939-1940 to incorporate several political parties and newspapers so as to prevent the French administration from creating a coalition with the "feudal authority" (i.e., the Royal court) based on the treaties of 1884. That political alliance for such a specific purpose understandably excluded the Royalists. ⁵⁴ The fight continued through the Anti-imperialist Unified Front of Indochina, towards the establishment of a Soviet Government of Indochina. This final goal, however, was to be concealed under a milder slogan, according to the Resolutions of the Sixth Assembly of the Indochinese Communist Party's Central Commission (November 1939):

The Anti-Imperialist Front leaves aside the slogan demanding a Soviet (worker-peasant-soldier) government, which is the form of government special to the toiling masses, and uses, instead, the slogan calling for a Federal Democratic Republican Government of Indochina, which is a form of Government common to all strata of people. ⁵⁵

After many years of campaign, in August 1945, the Communists concentrated intense pressures against the Emperor Bao Dai and persuaded him to abdicate in favour of a "Democratic Republican Government." ⁵⁶ The Communists immediately solicited his cooperation, which was given in the official abdication ceremony, thus cleverly implying the existence of an alliance between themselves and the

Royalists. This was of the greatest importance because it gave Ho Chi Minh's new government all the appearance of a legitimate successor government and, at the same time, placated the large section of Vietnamese opinion which still believed in the traditional "mandate of heaven".

In return for the King's generous concession, Ho Chi Minh, who had campaigned some twenty years for the overthrow of the royal dynasty, then conferred on the ex-king the honour of the "first citizen of the Democratic Republic" and invited him to join the New Government in Hanoi.

At the Independence ceremony on 2 September 1945, the ex-king was at President Ho's side when he solemnly announced that "Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated". Then, citizen Vĩnh Thụy (personal name of the emperor) was listed as the "Supreme Advisor to the Government". Ho also embraced and kissed the king he had overthrown as a public gesture of their "mutual admiration and collaboration".

Thereafter, Ho Chi Minh was at pains to bow low and to show all outward signs of respect for his supreme advisor. Such irreverent revolutionary leaders and cadres as called the ex-king Ông (mister) or Đồng chí (comrade), were reprimanded by Ho and, were instructed to address the advisor as Ngài (Sir). ⁵⁷ According to a source very close to Ho, the new president often went to great lengths in comforting his ex-king advisor, explaining to him that the change of national authority had been

made necessary by the critical circumstances of Việt-Nam and by the international situation, reassuring Ngài of Ho's personal regard and affection, of the possibility of Ngài's return to power after the normalisation of the country, of Ho's unique desire for national independence and so forth. 58

In December 1945, Ho found it politic to instruct his new cadre, Lê Văn Hiến, who was sent to Hue on a mission, to pay a special visit to Lady Thành Thái and Lady Duy Tân who had been living in obscurity since their respective husbands, king Thành Thái and king Duy Tân, were forced by French authorities to resign. This would remind the people, especially to the Royalists, of the brutal depositions in the past and would minimise the pain caused by Bao Dai's recent abdication. At the same time, it would sharply contrast the new democratic president's extraordinary courtesy and kindness with the dictatorship and cruelty of the French colonist's. Doubtless the gesture should also be viewed as a Marxist-Leninist tactic designed to exploit the contradictions among the various branches of royal descendants. Ho's political wishes were fulfilled, if one may believe the persuasive account given by Vo Nguyen Giap:

The wives of those Nguyen Dynasty's Kings who were deposed by French colonialists, were surprised and moved by President Ho's thoughtful gesture. Lady Thanh Thai affirmed that, since the installation of our Government, she had daily prayed for blessings on President Ho and his government rather than on the Royal family.

Her daughter-in-law, the wife of king Duy Tan, related that since the day her husband was sent into exile by the French, the royal family had simply ignored her. 59

To derive the maximum political advantage out of that "thoughtful gesture", Ho's Government "leaked" the news to the public through Hanoi newspapers:

Lady Bửu Lân (concubine of the past king Thành Thái) and Lady Vĩnh San (concubine of the late king Duy Tân) have expressed their support for the Democratic Government which in turn has decided to grant them a monthly pension of 500 piasters each, even though our country is so poor. 60

Through adroit publicity and by keeping the ex-king at his side in Hanoi, President Ho not only dispelled the danger of any revolt from the royalists, but also succeeded in giving people in the country and all over the world the impression that his Democratic Government constantly enjoyed royal approval and support.

The Provisional Government presented by Ho Chi Minh in September 1945, was also designed to give the appearance of incorporating all political parties and thereby to become a physical expression of Viet-Nam's political unity in order to obtain the support of the whole nation.

Two weeks before, the Viet Minh had already sponsored a meeting of students and intellectuals at the university of Hanoi officially to ratify three resolutions:

- i. That the Emperor should abdicate in favour of a republican regime, and national power should be transferred

to a Provisional Government formed by the Viet Minh.

- ii. That the Viet Minh Front immediately negotiate with other parties with a view to forming a Provisional Coalition Government.
- iii. That all political parties, all social strata and the broad masses of the entire nation should support the Provisional Government in order to consolidate our national independence. 61

Actually the Viet Minh had convened their "People's Congress" at Tân Trào (on 16 August 1945 according to the Viet Minh publications), to secure the approval of the Viet Minh ten-point programme and to appoint a National Liberation Committee. After its closure, Ho Chi Minh issued an "Appeal for General Insurrection," transforming that Liberation Committee into a provisional government "of the people, by the people and for the people", and appealed for solidarity:

Recently, the Viet Minh Front convened the Viet-Nam People's Congress and appointed the National Liberation Committee to lead the entire people in the resolute struggle until national independence is won.

.....
At present, the National Liberation Committee is, so to speak, our provisional government. Unite around it and see to it that its policies and orders are carried out throughout the country. 62

Just before the "insurrection day" in Hanoi, an anti-colonialist demonstration was transformed into a "show of

unity" in favour of the Viet Minh. Ironically, the whole dramatic operation was staged in front of the Hanoi Municipal Theatre. It was a masterly performance on the evening of 17 August 1945 and was widely publicized the very next day by all Hanoi newspapers, thanks to a judicious early press release on the part of the Viet Minh! ⁶³ At that meeting in the name of the "Viet-Nam Democratic Party" which had been created the year before, ⁶⁴ a militant called on all compatriots to join the Viet Minh and to "unite into a single bloc."

Japan has surrendered... The French are endeavouring ... to reimpose their rule on our country... The Tran Trong Kim government is completely powerless.

.....
Those compatriots who are still confused should quickly wake up.

The ranks of the Viet Minh are ready to welcome you... Let us unite together into a single bloc. ⁶⁵

Finally, the "Democratic" orator asked his compatriots to voice with him only two parallel slogans (a rare departure from customary verbosity) which were carefully contrived to suggest the equaling of two ideas, Viet-Nam and Viet Minh:

VIỆT-NAM ĐỘC LẬP MUÔN NĂM! (Long live Independent Viet-Nam)

MẶT TRẬN VIỆT MINH MUÔN NĂM! (Long live the Viet Minh Front)

On 19 August 1945, a Viet Minh representative who spoke to a large meeting, in Hanoi, also suggested the

the creation of a united democratic government:

...the essential thing for the time being is to set up immediately a Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, with the participation of the broad masses of the population, thus enabling the people to determine their fate for themselves. 66

The following week, the Viet Minh Liberation Committee, joined by some "allied Democrats," converted itself into a provisional government and sent its introductory "address to the whole nation" unambiguously to assert that it was "the broad and complete expression of the National United Front:"

...The Provisional Government is not a Government formed only of representatives of the Viet Minh Front as some people have wrongly understood. Neither is it composed only of representatives of various political parties. It is truly a government of national unity, having the noble mission of leading the country until the convening of the National Assembly which will elect the official Democratic Republican Government.

...Under the National banner, our compatriots should close their ranks and support the Provisional government in order to defend our freedom and independence... 67

The Provisional Government presented by Ho Chi Minh on 2 September 1945, retained eight of the ten members of the Viet Minh Liberation Committee and added seven new members. Among these new members, Pham Ngoc Thach was a convert to communism, Duong Duc Hien, a Democrat "allied" to the Viet Minh, Nguyen Manh Ha, a Catholic and son-in-law of George Marrane, a communist deputy in the

French Parliament, Nguyen Văn Tô, a "non-partisan but very co-operative scholar", and so forth. ⁶⁸

A few communist names like Nguyễn Lương Bằng, nicknamed Anh Cả (Oldest Brother) or Sao Đỏ (Red Star), did not appear on the official list but worked behind the scenes. They were later publicly praised as excellent examples for the whole people to imitate:

...Some comrades, members of the Viet-Nam National Liberation Committee who, having been elected by the National People's Congress, should have taken part in the Provisional Government, but of their own accord withdrew to give the place to patriotic personalities outside the Viet Minh Front. This was a selfless, magnanimous gesture of men who did not care for position and put the interests of the nation and people's unity, above individual interests. This is a praiseworthy, honourable gesture that we must imitate. ⁶⁹

The key political posts, however, were firmly held by members of the Viet Minh: Ho Chi Minh was President and Foreign Minister; Tran Huy Liệu, Propaganda Minister; Chu Van Tấn, a representative of ethnic minorities, defence Minister.

On the same day, the Tổng Bộ Việt Minh (General Directorate of the Viet Minh) made public a nation-wide appeal:

Let all strata of the population, all patriotic organisations unite closely together!

...All of us must support the Provisional Government and carry out its orders.

...Unity, struggle consolidation of inde-

pendence, such are our watchwords for the present time. 70

The ordinary people inspired by patriotism were conditioned to accept that kind of appeal and ready to sacrifice everything for independence, but the difficult problem that the Viet Minh had to face was the strong opposition from other political parties like Viet-Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Nationalist Party) or briefly Viet Quoc, Viet-Nam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh (The Revolutionary League) or Viet Cách, Đại Việt (Great Viet Nam), Phục Quốc (National Restoration) and several other groups like Thanh Niên Ái Quốc (the Patriotic Youth),

The Communists first made every effort to absorb various groups into their Viet Minh "united front". When the Thanh Niên Ái Quốc (Patriotic Youth), the Phục Quốc (Restoration) and the Dai Viet (Greater Viet-Nam) refused to submit to the Viet Minh leadership, they were eliminated by force. 71

The situation in South Viet-Nam was different: the noncommunist organisations were very popular and the Viet Minh did not play the dominant role. 72 The Thanh Niên Tiên Phong (Vanguard Youth), the Phục Quốc (Restoration), the Viet-Nam Độc Lập (Independence), the Cao Đài, the Hòa Hảo, the Trotskyites, the Civil Servants' Association and the intellectuals' group had formed a Nationalist Unified Front, the Mặt trận Quốc Gia Thống nhất, headed by Tran Van An, an outstanding nationalist (16 August 1945). It had been planned that the imperial delegate, Nguyen

Van Sâm, and his deputy Hồ Văn Ngã, would join the Executive Council of the above Unified Front to accept the administrative power transferred from the Japanese authorities in Saigon after their official surrender to the Allied Countries.

Suddenley, on 21 August 1945, leaflets and handbills appeared in many quarters of Saigon to publicise the Viet Minh as a powerful organisation that had been fighting both the French and the Japanese for national independence, and an official body recognised and supported by the Dong Minh (Allied Powers) as well as by China and Russia. Tran Van Giàu, the Moscow trained leader of the Viet Minh, then approached the Council of the United National Front and shrewdly persuaded the nationalist leaders to rally behind the Viet Minh and let the Viet Minh negotiate with the representatives of the Allied Powers who were due to arrive soon in Saigon. To do so, would be much more beneficial for the nation and the common cause of all patriotic organisations, according to the Viet Minh argument, because other organisations and the Unified National Front had been more or less connected with the Japanese, whereas, the Viet Minh had been on the side of the Allied Powers that had just defeated the Japanese forces.

That convincing reasoning led to the official emergence of the Viet Minh and a new coalition headed by a Provisional Executive Committee of which the majority of members were Communist leaders or converts: Trần Văn Giàu, Phạm Ngọc Thạch, Nguyen Van Tào, Dương Bạch Mai,

Huỳnh Văn Tiêng, and so forth. ⁷³ In other provinces in the South, the Communists likewise sent their cadres into the Thanh Nien Tien Phong Movement and "orientated the whole movement towards the Viet Minh goal". ⁷⁴

In the North, by September 1945, there was some competition between four main political parties, namely the Phuc Quoc (Restoration), the Viet Minh, the Viet-Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh (or Viet Cach) and the Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang (or Viet Quoc). ⁷⁵

These two major parties Viet Cach and Viet Quoc were able to withstand the Viet Minh several months, thanks to support from the Chinese Nationalist Government forces which had arrived to disarm the Japanese in Viet-Nam (North of the 16th parallel). For those political competitors, the Communists had nothing but hatred and condemnation. Realising, however, that to fight them while the Nationalist Chinese troops were still present in Hanoi, would result in political suicide for their Viet Minh Front, the Communists decided in favour of a policy of great flexibility. They offered to reorganise a new Provisional Government on coalition basis, postpone the General Election from December 1945 to 6 January 1946, and to reserve 70 seats in the National Assembly for the two nationalist parties. This conciliatory gesture was given publicity in many newspapers and the Provisional Coalition Government was announced by Ho Chi Minh in his official declaration of 1 January 1946:

With a view to winning complete independence and bringing about close co-operation between the various political parties to further

strengthen the Government, it is now named the Provisional Coalition Government. At this moment, if the parties unite, the Government can overcome difficulties. All the Vietnamese people want the Provisional Government to hold office until the election of the National Assembly which will change it into a definitive government. 76

But Ho Chi Minh ingenuously inserted the "practical point" that the military policy of the Provisional Government under his own leadership was:

to unify the various armed forces under the command of the Government. Parties are not allowed to have armies of their own. 77

After peacefully disarming the other political parties by the enunciation of an apparently fair political principle, Ho appealed for popular support of his Government's policy:

Such is the policy of the Provisional Coalition Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, I hope that the entire people will support it to enable the Government to succeed.

Long live Independent Viet-Nam! 78

In the meantime, the Communists methodically prepared a general election which resulted in a National Assembly "representing all social strata and various groups" but dominated, in fact, by the undeclared Communists. The Assembly, in turn, was to approve later the National Anthem, national flag, national constitution, proposed by the Viet Minh, to elect Ho Chi Minh to be President of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, and to entrust Ho with "the mission of forming a national united government". This coalition government presented by Ho Chi Minh included four members from the Viet Quoc and Viet

Cach parties, four members from the Viet Minh (undeclared Communists) and Dân Chủ (Democrats whose party had been created with the help of the Communists in June 1944) ⁷⁹ and two "non-partisan" members, namely Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, a very old man who died shortly afterwards, and Phan Anh who had been absorbed by the Viet Minh. ⁸⁰ A member of this "United Government" later reported that as Nguyen Hải Thần was a powerless vice-president, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng had only enough energy to sign those ready made "decrees" and Phan Anh, the nominal Minister of Defense was given the duty of kiến quân (inspection), duỡng quân (supply) and huân quân (training) whereas the right of dung quân (use of the army) was entirely in the hands of Vo Nguyen Giap, the head of the newly created Military Commissariat. ⁸¹

That coalition government came to existence after the signing at Chungking (28 February 1946) of the Franco-Chinese Agreements which allowed the French to replace Chinese Nationalist troops in Viet Nam. Vo Nguyen Giap then signed the Preliminary Agreement of 6 March 1946 on behalf of the Government, with Sainteny and General Salan signing for the French side. However, as the Viet Minh's attack against the Viet quoc and Viet Cach became more violent and open, tactical alliance between the Viet Minh and other political parties was fast coming to an end. Since August 1945, indeed, many outstanding leaders, nationalists like Trương Tử Anh, religious like Huỳnh Phú Sổ and Trotskyites like Tạ thu Thâu had been eliminated by the Viet Minh, following the Resolution of the Revolutionary Forces Conference of April 1945. ⁸²

To minimize the public shock of so many murders, the Communists were always careful to incriminate their political enemies and to incite the people's hatred against them before ordering their execution. Black lists of those alleged to be traitors were commonly to be found in Communist books and papers. Sometimes, the victims were secretly executed and the news was published, together with their alleged "crimes", much later to as to avoid unfavourable reactions from the ordinary citizens. Phạm Quỳnh, Ngô Đình Khả and Ngô Đình Huân, for example, were executed (buried alive, according to some sources) in August 1945, but the news was printed in Hanoi papers only some four months later.⁸³

One consequence of this policy of calculated murder of actual or potential political opponents, was that most of the non-Viet Minh members in the Hanoi National Assembly and in the Ho Chi Minh National United Government (March 1946) disappeared one after another, some being assassinated by the Đội Danh Dự (The "Honour Squad")⁸⁴ while others fled to China.⁸⁵

To fill the vacuum left behind by the Viet Quoc and the Viet Cach, the Communists hâped in the creation of another political ally, the Viet Nam Socialist Party (July 1946) "which was intended to win over the patriotic intellectuals".⁸⁶

At the second Session of the National Assembly (31 October 1946), Ho Chi Minh announced the resignation of the "National United Government" only to be entrusted by the

then almost exclusively Viet Minh National Assembly with the task of forming another cabinet. On 3 November 1945, Ho Chi Minh submitted his new coalition Cabinet ⁸⁷ to the Assembly, once again adding a well prepared address which emphasized the theme of national unity:

It was the express wish of the National Assembly's that the new Government should clearly reflect broad solidarity without any discrimination of political party. After being entrusted by the National Assembly with the formation of the Government, I consulted with many senior personalities, representatives of various organisations, and personalities representative of the various sections of society.

.....
I am thus able to declare before the National Assembly that this Government clearly expresses the people's spirit of coalition, that it is a Government wholly in accord with the actual situation and that it will endeavour to win independence and national unity, and build a new Viet Nam.

This is a national Government in which personalities from the North, the Centre and the South participate; especially our southern compatriots, who are not only fighting at the front to protect the country, but are also enthusiastically taking part in the construction of the Fatherland. ⁸⁸

Because of the critical situation obtaining in the country, the National Assembly was adjourned and the Constitution suspended, leaving all powers in the hands of the "United Government" of President Ho Chi Minh and a

small sub-committee of the Assembly itself, which would remain in permanent session. An absolut majority of this sub-committee's members were Communists and "allied" members.

Only a short time afterwards, Ho Chi Minh and his comrades withdrew to the jungle to wage a war of resistance against the French, and, at the same time, to carry out the first stage of the "Socialist Revolution", Bao Dai and the surviving nationalist leaders on the other hand had, by then escaped from the Viet Minh Front and were undertaking the formation of a new nationalist government. So ended the short-lived alliance, between Communists and Nationalists.

In 1947, when Bao Dai entered into negotiations with France to work out terms under which a nationalist government might function in Viet Nam, the Viet Minh undertook a vigorous campaign of sabotage. The Communist journals published whole series of attacks, mostly with the help of Tú Mỡ's satires, against Bao Dai. ⁸⁹

At first, some relatively mild verses served as a warning to put the Vietnamese on their guard against the activities of the former Emperor.:

Bây giờ bọn thuế dân kia

.....
Đổi lửa lời Rẻo ngài rạ

Chủ trường tân Rịch giảng hòa|bung xung. 90

The colonialists are now

.....
Deceiving the ex-king and persuading
him to stage a puppet show of peace
negotiation

Sarcasm and attacks of a relatively anodyne nature later gave place to a "funeral oration" whose purpose was to pronounce a political "death sentence" on the supreme counsellor who had deserted the "United Government" of Ho Chi Minh. Yet, the true circumstances of the emperor's enforced abdication and the purpose of the Communists' "gentlemanly alliance" may be perceived in the following passage of the poem:

Đầu còn muốn giữ còn đầu
 Bề ha âu đành ha bề
 Nộp ấn ngọc, Riềm vàng cho Chính quyền Cách
 mạng, nguyện làm dân một nước tử - do,
 Quảng mang rộng, mũ miện, theo chế độ cộng
 hòa, thề thoát vị phượng, vua nô lệ.
 Ai mớm lời mà ăn nói biết điều?
 Ai bảo lời mà thoát lui hộp lễ?
 Nhân dân cụ tướng cứu hoàng Bao Đại đã hy
 sinh, ngôi, bàu, để xây, mộng cộng hòa.
 Chính phủ vội làm cỗ văn tối cao, cùng
 hộp tác tâm thành, lo dập nền thịnh trị.
 Nào ai, bạc đãi cho, cam!
 Sao nỡ đến lòng quá tệ! 91

Fortunate to survive and anxious to remain alive,
 His majesty had to give up his august throne.
 Offering his golden seal and sword to the
 Revolutionary Government, choosing to be citi-
 zen of a free country, Rejecting the royal
 emblems to embrace the Republican system, he
 abdicated from the slavery imposed by his crown.
 Who was it who framed those noble words for
 him?

Who was it who counselled that attitude of
 reason?

Our people believed the ex-emperor Bao Dai had
 given up his throne in all sincerity to lay the
 foundation of the Republic.

Our Government invited him to be supreme
 counsellor, to play his part in the nation's
 prosperity.

Why then did he undergo so base a change of heart?

When, in 1953, Bao Dai sent in his official capacity as Chief of State a formal communication to the government of Ho Chi Minh, suggesting a national reconciliation for peace, the latter chose to treat him as though he had never relinquished the post of counsellor and to rebuke him in a personal letter of reply:

Dear brother Vinh Thuy,

I am very much surprised to see you sending to the Viet Nam Democratic Republic Government an official letter suggesting peace negotiation. You convey such a message as if this aggression war were started by me or by you and not by French colonialists and American interventionists. Half a million of the French foreign legion with so many airplanes, tanks, bombs and canons, are savaging our fatherland and killing our compatriots. What do you think about that?

As for you, the former supreme counsellor of the Viet Nam Democratic Republic, if you had been faithful to your pledge "to be a free citizen rather than an enslaved king" you would have been with me, here, to lead the Viet Nam people and army in fighting French colonialism and American interventionism. Together we would have been looking forward to the glorious day when you and I, on the same side, would pass sentence on our adversaries, (i.e. the French colonialists and international reactionaries) and then, chase them out! That day, my dear brother, is not too far away. 92

Apparently, Ho Chi Minh was hoping to derive further advantage political as well as psychological, from that "royal alliance" of 1945.

Concerning the political alliance with the two major parties, the semi-official history of the Communist Party, published twenty years later, explained its meaning and purpose quite candidly:

Our Party contracted an alliance with the Viet Cach Party of Nguyen Hai Than and the Viet Quoc Party of Nguyen Tuong Tam, in order to attract the truly patriotic Vietnamese out of those organisations and away from the influence of those leaders. 93

And yet, addressing the official assembly commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party, Truong Chinh still took pains to praise the Communist's "noble theory" of political alliance in flowery terms:

It is our Party's policy to realise lasting solidarity and co-operation with other friendly political parties within the front in order to struggle against the common enemy of the nation and build a peaceful unified, independent, democratic, prosperous and strong Viet Nam. 94

3^o Alliance with social and professional groups.

In order to transform the wide variety of groups and organisations which existed in Vietnam at that time into auxiliary forces serving their own revolutionary aims, the Communists designed and executed an ingenious and effective "social policy".

Essentially, this policy depends upon finding common ground which serves to identify the aims of the Communist Party with those of others. In practice, the Communists,

while concealing their own identity and their political aspirations, became active members of every accessible social and professional organisation, and gave proof of their professional competence, their concern and zeal in working for the interests of those groups. When their strenuous and unflagging efforts won them entry into the leading echelons, they used their positions to manoeuvre these groups into supporting some "good cause", carefully selected to appeal to the sentiments of the membership - usually struggles against foreign oppression, campaigns for national independence, social justice or the like. They would then manipulate the activities of the groups until these conformed, in a greater or lesser degree, with the undeclared aims already determined by the Communist Party. Such tactics constituted an important part of many Communist programs, resolutions, instructions and training courses, as shown in these examples:

The mission of the party is to use the daily needs of the proletarians and peasants as initial steps gradually to lead them to the battlefield of revolution. The Party should immediately establish its leadership over the masses as soon as the high tide of revolutionary forces wells up.

.....
In normal times, Communist leaders should put forward, according to the circumstances, some slogans for a "minimum program" (in favour of the masses' interests), which accord with the masses interests, like wage increases, tax reductions, lower living costs and so forth, in order gradually to widen the revolutionary struggle. Those "minimum slogans", should then be related

to the principal slogans of the Party like abolition of imperialism, fudalism and landlords, the complete independence of Indochina, a worker-peasant government.... It is a serious mistake not to pay attention to the daily needs and struggle of the masses; and likewise, it would be a great mistake if one pays attention to their daily needs but is not concerned with the main goals of the Party. 95

The Eighth Plenum of the Indochinese Communist Party's Central Committee (May 1941) was at pains to outline some concrete campaign tactics:

Any slogan which cannot be carried out under present conditions, should not be advanced, because the impractical is useless and empty. So, the current tactic of our Party is to use a method of wide popular appeals capable of awakening nationalist sentiments among the people. 96

Thus, in the 1940's, the Communists did their best to infiltrate the associations of friendship (ái hữu), of mutual assistance (tưởng tế), the kinship societies (hội hiếu), the sports clubs, and the rural co-operatives (hội cấy, hội lợp nhà).

To exercise a greater influence among students and intellectuals, the Communist cadres joined the staff of "Evening Courses", the Society for Literacy (Hội Truyền bá Quốc ngữ), promoted a movement of cultural revolution and created the Cultural Association for National Salvation.⁹⁸

In February 1943, the Central Committee issued an Instruction emphasizing the necessity for the Cultural

Movement and outlining its various activities:

Our Party should send out some cadres specializing in cultural activities to promote a movement of progressive culture for national salvation, to oppose the retrogressive fascist culture. In the cultural centres like Hanoi, Saigon, Hue... cultural organisations for national salvation should be established to rally the intellectuals and the men of culture. A "vanguard culture group", a "Marxist study group" or a "Viet Nam history study group" are examples of what might be done".99

To help so important a project, a Cultural thesis was carefully drafted and approved by the Communist Party's Central Committee as a study document and guideline:

The cultural front is one of three areas (economic, political, cultural) where a Communist must be active. To influence public opinion and to have fruitful propaganda, our Party must work not only for a political revolution but also for a cultural one. 100

The Party also pointed out the duty of the Marxist cultural leaders in Viet Nam:

What must be done is to struggle in education and publication for the victory of dialectical and historical materialism against those erroneous philosophies of both European and Asian origins, with more or less harmful effects in our country, like those of Confucius, Descartes, Bergson, Kant, Nietzsche...., for the victory of socialist realism over classicism, romanticism, naturalism, symbolism etc.... 101

These secret instructions were given to Communist members whereas the constitution of the Cultural Association for national salvation suggested that its only philosophy was one of nationalism. Thus, the purpose of the Association was supposedly:

to rally those patriotic cultural men who earnestly take part in fighting against the French and the Japanese and in building up a new national, democratic and progressive culture. 102

Following the pattern adopted for all Viet Minh organisations, the existence of this association was kept secret. Under the guidance of the Party officials Trường Chinh, Hoàng Quốc Việt, and the local leadership of Vũ Quốc Uy, Nhu Phong, Lê Quang Đạo, it attracted a number of outstanding university students, men such as Nguyen Đình Thi, young writers such as Tô Hoài, Nguyễn Huy Tưởng, Nam Cao, Nguyễn Hồng, Thép Mới, and Professor Đặng Thái Mai. 103

This Association was small, but, since it incorporated writers and artists, it was considered "a precious capital of the Party", a nucleus around which a much wider cultural front might be constructed before and after the success of the August Revolution.

It was this nucleus that attracted the "General Association of Students and Intellectuals", helped Dường Đức Hiền and his "progressive" group to form the "New Democracy Group" which was later renamed the "Viet Nam Democratic Party" and was incorporated in the Viet Minh Front.

Other intellectuals and artists who remained non-Viet Minh, were later urged to join the "Viet Nam Socialist Party" (28 July 1946), an ally of the Viet Minh. Students and teachers were submitted to a process of transformation through consecutive intensive courses: Rèn cán chính cỡ (Forming the Cadres and shaping the organisations), Học tập dân chủ (Democratic study), Cải tạo tư tưởng (Thought reform). The content and direction of educational reform can be read from the typical message of President Ho to the national congress of education, convened in July 1951:

...At this congress you must review in detail the "reform" of the educational programme and its method of application in order to correct your errors and cultivate your good qualities.

You should make sure that education is related to our people's life, to our resistance war and the construction of our country. Make every effort to harmonize classroom education with the common work of political propaganda and mass education....

On 10 December 1951, Ho gave the artists a basic instruction on their political duty:

Literature and arts belong to the same front, on which you are fighters.... To fulfil your tasks, you must have a firm class stand and a sound ideology....

Literature and arts, like all other activities, cannot be taken apart from the economic and political fields, but they must be included in them.

To inculcate in the intellectuals and professionals

a revolutionary ideology and to consolidate their political stand, the Communist Government organised for them a special ideological remoulding course that lasted ten weeks (from 15 July to 26 September 1953). Ho Chi Minh made a personal appearance at the closing ceremony to congratulate the participants for "all of you have made progress, more or less".

Ho assured them that "our Party, Government and people love and esteem the intellectuals". He, then, spoke frankly of their weaknesses while sympathising with their having been exploited by colonialists and feudalists. This ingenious approach succeeded in arousing a guilt complex in those "bourgeois intellectuals" and in urging them to do penance or redemption work by actively cooperating with the resistance government which was anti-colonialist and anti-feudalist. This was also shrewdly suggested by Ho when he presented to them the shining example of "strong Nationalism and indomitable spirit" on the part of the workers and peasants.

All of you have clearly realised that formerly the colonialists and feudalists unashamedly oppressed and exploited the workers and peasants materially. But the workers and peasants kept a firm class stand, a strong nationalism and an indomitable spirit. When it was propitious to carry out the revolution and the resistance,,the workers and peasants bravely rose up and, placing the common interest above their private interests, fought heroically and selflessly. As for the intellectuals, though they were also materially exploited by the colonialists and feudalists in a direct manner, yet they

received a tiny part of the latter's huge profits as a bribe. But the colonialists and feudalists ruthlessly oppressed and exploited the intellectuals from a spiritual viewpoint. As a result the intellectuals then became divorced from reality and from the people. Some of them indulged in day-dreams and forgot that their country was enslaved and that they themselves were kept in bondage; they could not distinguish friend from foe nor right from wrong. This is a most cruel manoeuvre of the colonialists and feudalists.

It would be unrealistic and utterly imprudent for those intellectuals to express even the slightest dissent after such a thorough exercise of brainwashing. But what was to be done? To this anticipated question, the old revolutionary leader obligingly offered a very dialectical answer:

All of you have clearly understood that, in order to free yourselves from slavery, to regain independence and power, you must carry out revolution and resistance. The resistance war is a continuation of the revolution to fulfil our revolutionary task. Our revolution is a revolution for national liberation, democratic, anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolution of the people. It is basically a peasant revolution or an agrarian revolution.

Promising a victorious outcome, Ho called upon the intellectuals, not only to cooperate with the people but also to set them a good example by being "the first to endure hardship and the last to enjoy comfort". After

citing Marxism-Leninism as "man's greatest discovery and the swiftest road to development", exemplified in the "new and immense world camp of democracy and peace headed by the Soviet Union", he spoke of the "unexpected progress" of Viet Nam with outstanding heroes and heroines (Tran Dai Nghia had been made an intellectual hero because of his contributions to the manufacturing of weapons and ammunitions). President Ho then bid the intellectuals to embark on his glorious revolutionary path:

In a word, nine years ago, our people were enslaved, today they are masters of the land. This is because our revolutionary path has been enlightened by Marxism-Leninism.

To struggle in a glorious epoch and to serve as cadres for an heroic people are honours and at the same time heavy tasks for the intellectuals. To fulfil these tasks you must keep pace with the movement and the progress of our people; you must reform your ideology and adopt a firm political stand.

Among those gathered for the ideological remoulding, were some elder Confucian scholars. Other Vietnamese intellectuals must also be familiar with the elementary concepts of Confucian ethics which they had learned at home and in schools. In order to make his Marxist-Leninist lesson more familiar and more effective to his special audience, Ho Chi Minh judiciously chose to expound it in terms of Confucian ethics:

We must constantly remember the precept that one must first Chinh tâm, tu thân

(right one's mind and improve one's virtues) in order to trị quốc bình thiên hạ (rule the country and govern the people). "To right one's mind and improve one's virtues" is a work of self-transformation.

Returning to his Marxist terminology, Ho strongly suggested the use of "two sharp weapons" as very helpful to that "internal revolution":

There are two sharp weapons to help us transform ourselves, namely, to co-ordinate study with practice and to frankly make self-criticism while welcoming criticism from others without fear nor concealment.

Finally, Ho challenged the graduates of the thought-reform course with a dutiful recommendation that may reveal great expectation as well as close surveillance on the part of the regime:

I hope that upon returning to your offices and your localities, you will continue to study and to transform yourselves into an intelligentsia of our time and of our people; the Party, the Government and the people are looking forward to your endeavours.

Thus in marked contrast with the Nghe Tinh soviet movement (1930-31) which had the intellectuals high on the list of principal enemies to be completely eliminated (Trí, Phú, Địa, Hào, Đào tận gốc, Trốc tận rễ), Hanoi Government succeeded in enlisting intellectuals and professionals to their "cultural army". To make this rapprochement between "bourgeois intellectuals" and "proletarian toilers" less shocking and more acceptable to both sides,

at least in speech and writing, the communist administration has replaced the traditional term trí thức (intellectual) with the new one, lao động trí óc (brain worker), which seemingly denoted a close relationship to lao động chân tay (manual worker). This small change fitted in very well with the new name Đảng Lao động of the Indochinese Communist Party.

4^o Alliance with religious groups.

After the failure of the Nam Kỳ Insurrection (November 1940), the Communist Party in South Viet Nam was rendered ineffective as a political force by the thoroughness and ferocity of French repressive measures. Communications with the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party were severed while most of the leaders in the South were arrested and executed or imprisoned, consequently the Southern Segment of the Communist Party remained incapable of conducting any activities until 1943 and the Viet Minh Movement scarcely became known in South Viet Nam before August 1945.¹⁰⁴ This situation of relative weakness explained why the Viet Minh sought to establish an alliance with the Cao Đài and the Hòa Hảo in the South.

a) The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao.

During the early 1940's, the two politico-religious groups, the Cao Đài¹⁰⁵ and the Hòa Hảo,¹⁰⁶ were attracting increasing numbers of adherents in the populous Mekong delta and both became corporate members of the Nationalist Unified Front, a coalition of South Vietnamese political groups, which planned to assume administrative powers in Saigon as soon as the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies.

The Viet Minh, which arrived only belatedly on the South Vietnamese political scene, shrewdly allied itself with the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, infiltrated the Thanh niên Tiền phong (Vanguard Youth) and gradually took over the leadership of the Nationalist Unified Front to seize power in the provinces of the Mekong delta and also in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn.

Tran Huy Lieu, the director of the History Department of the State Science Committee in North Viet Nam reported in the following terms, on the "peaceful policy" adopted by the Viet Minh because of the weakness of its position:

In Long Xuyen...the organisations for national salvation Viet Minh were unable to develop satisfactorily because of the enthusiastic Vanguard Youth Movement and the reactionary propagation of Hoa Hao religion. Faced with such a situation, the Viet Minh provisional committee of the province immediately changed its tactics, infiltrating its own Youth for National Salvation into the Vanguard Youth Movement in which it formed a nucleus which would eventually take over the leadership.

In the matter of the Hoa Hao, we approached their leaders and proposed an Alliance for National Salvation which would pursue a policy of fighting the Japanese... 107

The astute Viet Minh manoeuvres on the day of insurrection were also vividly and proudly related by the same author (p.195):

The greatest difficulty in seizing power in Long Xuyen arose, not from the Japanese nor the puppet administration, but rather from the Hoa Hao religion. Its followers, so numerous and deeply rooted in this area, were our competitors in the struggle to seize power... On 25 August, in front of a huge meeting attended by hundreds of thousands of people of all social strata and religious denominations, the Insurrection Committee indicted colonialism and feudalism, proclaimed the Viet Minh program, and declared national independence. In the beginning, we were still not masters of the situation because mingled with the red banners with hammer and sickle or golden star of the Communist Party and of the Viet Minh Front, were also the yellow flags with red star or triple stripes, of the Vanguard Youth and the old regime. Later on, under pressure from the masses ~~sic~~, the non Communist and non-Viet Minh flags gradually disappeared. The meeting was then transformed into a parade to demonstrate the massive force we now controlled.

The same document candidly revealed (p.196) the final result of that alliance policy, an outcome which was predictable and typical:

The following day, we put under arrest a few reactionary Hoa Hao leaders. But, three days later, there was established in Long Xuyen a People's United Revolutionary Committee embracing representatives of various political parties and religious denominations under the leadership of the provincial committee of the Indochinese Communist Party.

The Communist treatment of the Hòa Hảo in Long Xuyên, was also applied to the Cao Đài in Tây Ninh and other areas. ¹⁰⁸

When the Hòa Hảo and the Cao Đài refused to submit their forces to the Viet Minh leadership, their religious leaders were condemned, and many of them, including the founder of the Hòa Hảo religious sect, Huỳnh Phú Sổ, were kidnaped and murdered by Communist forces. ¹⁰⁹

b) The Buddhists.

In the North, the Communists also approached Buddhist monks in the name of the sacred cause of national independence, hoping to benefit from their support and protection. The Communist general Văn Tiến Dũng, for example, had chosen in December 1942, to disguise himself as a Buddhist monk in the pagoda of Bật Xuyên village (Mỹ Đức, Hà Đông), so as to continue his revolutionary activities. ¹¹⁰

Văn Tiến Dũng himself provides an account of his motives and of his preparation for becoming a Buddhist monk:

It was necessary for us to have a secure place as a base for our activities. After consultation with Ly B., we decided to apply for the use of the pagoda in Bot Xuyen village....This pagoda did not have any resident monk and its location was "good": only one of its sides faced the village while the remaining three overlooked ricefields. Thus our comings and goings were less conspicuous.

To prepare myself for this "monastic" performance, I went to the Quan Su pagoda in Hanoi to buy a few Buddhist books in quốc ngữ (romanized Vietnamese), from which I learned the pagoda ceremonial.

On 13 December 1942, after all preparations had been completed, it was time for me to live "in the shadow of Buddha". I left the house of Lý B., crossed the paddyfields, and went into thick bush to change into the brown habit of the Buddhist monk and to put on a brown head covering to conceal my hair. Then, accompanied by Lý B., I walked devoutly through the main entrance to the pagoda with the pious invocation "Nam-mô a - di - đà Phật" on my lips.¹¹¹

Since Buddhist pagodas were usually situated in remote areas and Buddhist monks did not maintain regular contact with the people, the Communist cadres sometimes sought shelter and food in the shadow of Buddha, and found the pagodas such secure refuges that they even dared to hold meetings and to conduct training courses there. In May 1945, for example, a meeting of Viet Minh cadres was held in the pagoda of An Xá (Quảng Bình) at which mass organisations, general insurrection and Party business were discussed.¹¹²

A Communist writer, Vũ Quốc Uy, still remembers his first meeting in 1943 with "comrade Hoàng Quốc Việt" (whose real name was Hà Bá Cang, but who was then using the aliases Hưởng or Liên) in a pagoda:

Upon our arrival, the Buddhist prior came out, recognised the guests, and with special regard for comrade Viet,

warmly welcomed us in to the rear hall. Those deserted pagoda in the countryside were so very convenient for our rendez-vous and meetings. The reason why we conducted extensive propaganda among the Buddhist monks was so that we might use many different centres for our activities. 113

It was also in a pagoda close to Tông and Bái villages (between Công Nhật Tú and Đồng Văn area) that Vũ Quốc Uy and other comrades received their training in Leninism, guerilla warfare and revolution, under Hoàng Quốc Việt. The Communist writer Uy could not help but reflect ironically:

Sometimes I wondered if the prior would ever realize that the guests, to whom he extended such king hospitality, were the ones who tried to persuade the toiling people not to believe in Spirit or Buddha but rather in themselves as sources of salvation? 114

To rally the Buddhists into their United Front after the August Revolution, the Communists took pains to create the Buddhist Association for National Salvation and also the Buddhist Monks and Buddhist Nuns Associations for National Salvation.

Nor did the Communist cadres neglect to help those Buddhist Associations, periodically, to draft and present some letters of support to President Ho Chi Minh. Those letters, of course, were accorded publicity in Hanoi newspapers. An outstanding example was to be found in Cứu Quốc newspaper, No. 129 (29 December 1945), just one week

before the General Elections:

A Resolution of the Buddhist General Association for National Salvation, Hanoi Section.

On the occasion of the solemn feast of AMIDA, considering that Ho Chi Minh has sacrificed himself to regain national independence, and has guided the nation through such stormy times, the Buddhist General Association for National Salvation resolved:

1. That all the Buddhist followers and disciples in the metropolitan area of Hanoi would unanimously vote Ho Chi Minh into the National Assembly;
2. That all should acclaim and support Ho Chi Minh to be elected President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Only a few years later, disillusion overtook the Buddhists when they found themselves living under a totalitarian and anti-religious regime. They were heartbroken to see some of the most courageous monks, Venerable Tuệ Quang and Venerable Tuệ Chiếu, for example, publicly condemned as "traitors", and to learn about their later execution.

On one occasion in Nghe An, during the massive exodus of refugees from North Viet Nam, (1954-1955), 96 out of 115 Buddhists who had attempted to flee to the South, were reportedly eliminated. ¹¹⁵

Refugees who had escaped from the North and defectors from North Vietnamese troops in the 1960's, testified that in the North, apart from some pagodas in Hanoi and some celebrated shrines left elsewhere as showcases for the

enjoyment of Western diplomats and privileged visitors, all other genuine Buddhist organisations and centres of worship had been effectively abolished by the communists. They were replaced by a "progressive" organisation created by the Communist authorities, namely the "Patriotic Buddhists' Association".

At the same time, communist writers, like Nguyễn Hồng Phong, openly criticized Buddhism and reviled the Buddhist monks:

Buddhist monastic life has long been an object of derision for our people. Buddhist monks have been ridiculed in popular sayings, folk songs and comedies. To the people, Buddhist monks are nothing but lazy men who batten on society. We can cite dozens of comic stories and hundreds of popular sayings or folk songs directed against Buddhist monasteries, monks, and Buddhism itself. 116

Obviously, all those anti-Buddhist activities were, of course, postponed until communist power had been consolidated. As early as 1947, Hoang Quoc Viet declared at a high level conference of the Viet Minh:

During this stage, let us leave them alone, those shaved heads i.e., Buddhist monks and religious leaders in general and their flocks. The next stage, when communism is established, will be the proper time for us to dispose of them all. 117

It was also the same communist leader Viet who, twenty years later, told a communist visitor from South America:

There is no problem with the Buddhists. There are, however, problems with the Catholics.... 118

c) With the Catholics.

The Catholics, on the other hand, though a minority in Viet Nam, formed an integral part of an international Church with ramifications in most countries of the world and co-ordinated by an experienced and complex administration whose headquarters were in Rome. They were the closest knit, best organized, and therefore, the most influential group in the country at that time. Very active in the educational and social fields, the Catholic organisations had built up great prestige among the Vietnamese especially the educated people. Additionally, they were the recipients of very considerable support, both material and moral, from the Vatican and from Catholics all over the world. However, the royal edicts against christianity, the unhappy coincidence of evangelisation and colonization in the nineteenth century, the hatred and suspicion of Catholicism which resulted from the "Scholars' Movement", and the mistakes or scandals of some Frenchmen and Vietnamese converts had given rise to deeply rooted prejudice. Catholics were then, among other things, accused of being "traitors" or "fifth columnists".

The Viet Minh showed themselves past masters in the art of converting both assets and liabilities into productive capital for their own political undertakings. Immediately after Ho Chi Minh's seizure of power in August, 1945, anti-catholic rumours gained a wide currency in Viet Nam. French missionaries were alleged to have poisoned village wells, native Catholics to have served as spies,

and any connection with foreign missionaries became evidence of treachery or a ground for suspicion. A report reaching North Viet Nam from Saigon alleged that "French gunners had opened fire from the balcony of the bishop's house" (sic) killing Vietnamese demonstrators in Saigon. All this brought psychological pressure to bear upon the Vietnamese Catholics to prove themselves no less patriotic than their non-Catholic compatriots, which predisposed them to serve the struggle for national independence to the best of their ability.

In the Vinh diocese (embracing the three provinces Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh) for example, several priests and many laymen had been sent to labour camps by the French authorities in 1944, and released only after the Japanese coup d'Etat of 9 March 1945. The Viet Minh took pains to honour them as heroes and set them up as patriotic examples for the whole people to follow.

Anticipating the apprehension felt by the Catholics about the possibility of an anti-religious government, at the first Cabinet meeting on 3 March 1945, Ho Chi Minh decided that one of the most necessary and urgent tasks was to proclaim freedom of conscience and to emphasize the necessity of union between Catholics and non-Catholics.¹¹⁹

Hoping to create a favourable impression on non-Catholic Vietnamese, all the four Vietnamese bishops at that time (Nguyễn Bá Tòng, Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, Ngô Đình Thục and Lê Hữu Từ) addressed a collective letter to Pope Pius XII to plead for Viet Nam's independence and to appeal for more support from Vatican and Catholics everywhere especially in France:

....Our people have asked its four bishops to present to your Holiness the expression of their profound respect, and to request your blessing upon our national independence. Our people have struggled so hard to regain it and are now determined to preserve it at all costs. 120

A few weeks later, on 4 November 1945, the four bishops wrote another letter to Christians of the whole world, especially in Britain and America, to request their support for the just cause of Viet Nam:

....We sincerely ask our brother Christians effectively to intervene in order to save us from the horrors of war... Our country is being invaded now and must defend its independence together with justice and freedom... 121

The ex-queen Nam Phuong, whose name had become Mme Vinh Thuy, after the abdication of Bao Dai, being a Catholic, also wrote an open letter of appeal in favour of national independence and of the new Democratic Republican Government. All three letters were later published by Hanoi Information Service in pamphlet form, together with a message from President Ho Chi Minh to the French residents in Indochina. 122

The Viet Minh, in their turn, used the appeals written by Vietnamese Catholics of such great authority to persuade the Catholics to join their organisation of Women, Youth, Children, Peasants... for National Salvation. Answering the Government's appeal for unity and support,

the Catholic people joined the National Salvation Front en masse, organised a huge demonstration in Hanoi on 23 September 1945, and the largest public meeting ever to be held in Vinh (Ho's home province) in October 1945. As a result of some prompting by the Viet Minh leaders, a letter of support was sent to President Ho, promising him that Catholic people were ready to sacrifice everything, even their lives if necessary, for national freedom and happiness.

That message was naturally most welcome in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh earnestly acknowledged it in a very friendly and "devout" letter, dated 14 October 1945:

Your enthusiastic promise, dear friends, makes it clear that you are real patriots and true followers of Jesus. The Lord Jesus has sacrificed himself to win freedom and happiness for mankind. It is also for the freedom and happiness of our whole nation that our compatriots, both Catholic and non-Catholic, have to sacrifice and struggle. We hope that Catholics all over the world will eagerly respond to the dramatic appeal of our Catholic compatriots. 123

Little wonder that the Provisional Government of Ho Chi Minh "thoughtfully" included a Catholic, Nguyen Manh Ha, who was entrusted with the ministry of national economy. This government post was later given to Chu Ba Phuong for the sake of political alliance with the Nationalist Parties, and Ha was instructed by Ho to contact the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Drapier, to hint to the latter that a visit to Hanoi might be opportune, and to probe the

attitude of the Vatican representative towards Ho's Government.

Moreover, the Viet Minh cadres and local administrative committees were urged to show special concern for the Catholic communities and more respect to the clergy, to invite Catholic leaders to give speeches, to offer help in organising Catholic celebrations and so forth. Ho Chi Minh himself took the lead in showing "good will" to the Catholic Church by sending Nguyễn Mạnh Hà and his supreme counsellor Vĩnh Thụy to represent the Government at the consecration of bishop Lê Hữu Từ, who was subsequently named a Government Advisor.

Before Christmas, Ho found the time to honour his Catholic compatriots with a special letter, praising Jesus as the sublime liberator, and encouraging Catholic people to be active in the national liberation movement. This courteous, reassuring, and persuasive gesture became a regular practice during the resistance war and gave Ho the opportunity to appeal for more support and efforts on the part of Catholic people "with a view to holding a much more joyful Christmas celebration when the resistance war should end in victory".

Trần Văn Giàu, the Communist leader who had outmanoeuvred the politico-religious groups in the South, also found the time to come to the Christmas celebration of the Catholic League in Hai Phong, and "incidentally" to deliver a "highly motivating" speech partially based on his own biblical exegesis:

In the South, the idea of religious conflict does not exist. I myself was struggling side by side with Father Luat. The Youth delegation from the South numbers a Catholic representative among its members. In future, Southern Viet Nam will send Catholic representatives to the national parliament.

....Whoever is without any belief is not a real man. I myself have my own belief, the belief in Marxism-Leninism. Marx and Lenin were pursuing their work of salvation, salvation from misery, in similar fashion to their predecessor, Jesus. The Lord Jesus and his first twelve disciples were poor and oppressed, indeed. His words "my kingdom is not of this world" means that Jesus was disgusted with the world of oppression and exploitation of the Roman Empire. Hence, the Lord was determined to sacrifice himself to liberate men from misery. We all should follow the example of self-sacrifice, ~~100~~ set to us by the Lord.¹²⁴

The Viet Minh newspaper, Dân Chủ, which published Giau's visit and ideas, commented that "his ten-minute speech completely captivated the whole audience"!

A few years later that same persuasive speaker again made an allusion to the Infant Jesus, while preparing a political speech^{in a} training course for lawyers. On that occasion his remarks were loaded with contempt and insult. Immediately Comrade Ho, who rated the importance of political persuasion very highly, reprimanded his arrogant cadre and advised him "to be more realistic and

delicate" so as to avoid political complications and undesirable effects, ¹²⁵

But Giau's earlier promise of Catholic representatives in Parliament was scrupulously fulfilled in accordance with the Viet Minh plan. During preparations for the general election of January 1946, the Viet Minh Front inserted a few Catholic names into its list of recommended candidates with entirely predictable results: among the 333 elected representatives there were approximately twenty Catholics, including several priests. One Catholic priest, the Rev. Phạm Bá Trữc was later named a member of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, and also a vice-president of the Mat Tran Dan Toc Thong Nhat (Unified National Front) which combined the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet Fronts.

In December 1948, the Bishop of Bùi Chu, Msgr. Hồ Ngọc Cấn, died. Though the relationship between the Viet Minh and the Catholics was, at that time, becoming far less cordial, President Ho nevertheless wrote a letter of sympathy to Bishop Ho's flock:

It was with dismay that I received the sad news that the Most Reverend Ho Ngoc Can had passed away.

I very much regret that the war situation does not allow me to attend the bishop's funeral. The Committee of Administration and Resistance of the Third Zone has been requested to represent me at the funeral and to express my sincere condolence. ¹²⁶

By that time, Ho's supreme advisor, the ex-king Bao Dai, had formed his nationalist government, whose rule

extended over South Viet Nam and most cities and towns throughout the rest of the country.

People resident in the area of Bùi Chu and Phát Diêm had constituted themselves an autonomous zone under the leadership of Bishop Lê Hữu Từ, another former counsellor of Ho's Government. The Viet Minh Front, believing that its alliance with the Catholics was already in ruins, was prepared to bring them back under its control by force. Consequently, Bao Dai's Government, supported by the French, despatched a detachment of paratroops to help Phat Diem and Bui Chu.

Following several months of careful planning and preparation, the Viet Minh troops were at last ready to launch an attack on that area, whose inhabitants were predominantly Catholic. On 9 December 1949, Ho Chi Minh sent a very shrewd letter to justify his action and, at the same time, to make a final attempt to win back the cooperation of the Catholic people. This letter, which is a typical illustration of the political guile employed by the Viet Minh, merits quotation at length:

Dear Compatriots,

The French invaders and their puppet paratroops have dropped into Phat Diem. They have violated Vietnamese territory, and this hurts me deeply.

Moreover, the French invaders falsely declared that they had come at the invitation of the Catholics. Such an assertion has a doubly malicious purpose:

First, to smear our Catholic compatriots and to suggest that our Catholic compatriots are betraying their Fatherland in

favour of the colonialists;
 Secondly, to foment a fratricidal war
 in which we would kill one another for
 the benefit of the French. But, the
 French invaders will be defeated
 because, during the last few years,
 our Catholic compatriots have nobly
 contributed to the Resistance for
 national salvation. The reason they
 have done so is that during these past
 few years, the French invaders have
 destroyed churches, abused priests
 raped nuns, and plundered and massacred
 our Catholic compatriots no less than
 the non-Catholics. In the beginning,
 they pretended to be friendly and kind
 so as to deceive our Catholic com-
 patriots and win them over to their side,
 but these compatriots of ours have re-
 mained steadfast in face of every
 inducement.

The Government has sent its troops to
 Phat Diem to repulse the colonialist
 invaders in order to liberate our
 Catholic compatriots in this area from
 the fetters of those satanic enemies.

.....
 I wish you to maintain your patriotic
 spirit and to be strong enough to re-
 sist the French invaders, thus ful-
 filling your sacred duty of serving
 both God and the Fatherland. 127

The attack on Phat Diem signalled the beginning of a
 new phase, that of preparing to increase the scale of the
 war against the French and to apply sterner measures in
 domestic affairs. Once the Workers' Party had been form-
 ally and officially constituted, a campaign of violence and
 repression followed which ended the freedom and even the
 lives of many Catholics. During the years 1952 and 1953

three uprisings ¹²⁸ in predominantly Catholic areas of Nghe Tinh, were brutally suppressed, after which, a savage campaign of land reform stripped Catholic communities of their traditional resources and properties. Early in 1954, most of the Roman Catholic bishops and priests living under the Communist regime were restricted to their residences and, in one diocese, Vinh, nearly 50% of the priests were placed under arrest. Many of these suffered terribly in labour camps.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that, after the 1954 Geneva agreements had been concluded, nearly one million refugees, the majority of whom were Catholics, left North Viet Nam (the zone allocated to the Communist side by these agreements) for the South in a historic exodus of biblical proportions.

Priests and Catholic leaders were accused by the Communists of "forcing people to go South, to join the enemy camp": Communist cadres, newspapers and handbills publicised endless accusations and insults, reviling them with names like "reactionaries", "traitors", "hunting dogs" and so forth. ¹²⁹

Thereafter the Communist government, now in undisputed control of North Viet Nam, embarked on an "advance towards socialism", but it had to send its troops once more to suppress an uprising of peasants and fishermen, most of them Catholics, at Quỳnh Lưu (Nghe-an) in 1956.

Late in 1959, Truong Chinh still found it necessary publicly to condemn Catholic leaders in his report to the

National Assembly of Hanoi:

There are also reactionaries in the Catholic Church who take advantage of their spiritual power and dogmas to distort the truth about the co-operation movement, to deceive or coerce Catholic followers in an attempt to draw the religious elements away from the Party and Government.... We must maintain our vigilance against them and exert ourselves to frustrate their acts of sabotage. 130

At about the same time, the North Viet Nam Writers' Association organised a series of seminars and contests to encourage young writers to produce poems, plays, songs, or short stories designed to draw attention to campaigns, slogans, revolutionary tasks and so on. The best works submitted, being favourable to the Party and helpful to the implementation of its policies were subsequently published. Subtle attacks on the Church embodying hidden persuasions to induce the Catholics to support the Communist regime were published in pamphlets such as: Xung Đột (Conflict), Xóm Đao (a Catholic Village), Sự Đạo Thời Xã-hội chủ-nghĩa (Religion in the Socialist Era), Bên Đồng Nước Ưng (The Flooded Ricefields), Đá Ngâm (Hidden Rocks)....

In 1958, at the national conference of cadres convened to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, Truong Chinh again denounced religion as a force opposed to socialism:

In the socialist revolution in the North, the enemies to be overthrown.... are all the forces that oppose socialist transformation and socialist construction: exploiting elements...,

spies, bandits, reactionaries disguised as the followers of religion..."131

5⁰ Inter-national Alliances

Besides the alliance with different social classes, political parties, religious groups, and various sections of the Vietnamese population, the Communists always strived to achieve solidarity with the people of different nationalities both at home and abroad.

a) With the minorities on the highlands.

Since the Northwest of Viet Nam was geographically and strategically important as an area in which clandestine organisations might operate without fear of discovery, for communication lines with Southern China and other parts of Indochina, as well as being ideally suited to guerilla bases and military activities, the Communist leaders were determined to win over the minorities, Thổ, Mán, Thái, Mèo, Nùng and Chinese, who inhabited the highlands. For this purpose, Ho Chi Minh and the Communist cadres undertook the study of the local languages and customs, concerned themselves with building a lasting friendship with the highlanders, and recruited and trained some of their ablest men to be representatives and leaders of the minority people. Outstanding examples in the 1940's were Hoàng Văn Thụ and Chu Văn Tấn in the Bắc Sơn, Vũ Nhai area.

To carry out more effective propaganda, they published some lithograph newsletters written in Vietnamese, Chinese and minority languages. The Bắc Sơn paper, for

example, carried articles written in the Thô language. 132

The "Ten-Point Regulations" of the guerillas, the "Ten Honour Pledges" of the Armed Propaganda Brigade, 133 and the "Twelve Recommendations" were all carefully framed so as to accommodate to the beliefs and customs of those minorities in mountainous areas. Ho wisely advised his cadres:

To study the customs of each region
so as to be acquainted with the local
people to create a friendly atmosphere,
and gradually to explain and persuade
them to mitigate their superstitions. 134

But he also cautioned them:

Not to offend against the people's
beliefs and customs; not to sleep
before the family altar, not to raise
their feet over the hearth, not to
play music in the house.... 135

After the seizure of power in 1945, a Department in charge of Minorities was created and in December 1945, a Conference of Minorities was created and in December 1945, a Conference of Minorities' delegates was organized in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh took pains to reassure them again of their equality with all other citizens of the Independent Viet Nam and those delegates responded by giving their pledge of support and loyalty to the Hanoi Government, following the examples of their own heroes Hoang Van Thu, Nặng Van Cùn and so on. 136

To strengthen that loyal friendship, many memoirs, novels and short stories were published, giving accounts of the community life in various cùn and lán (villages and

hamlets in mountainous areas), of cooperation and support of the minorities people and the heroic deeds of their leaders. Nguyen Tuan in Tù Bút Kháng Chiến (resistance Chronicales), Nam Cao in Đôi Mắt (The Two Eyes), and Tô Hoài in Truyện Tây Bắc (Stories of the North West) did indeed, contribute their effective literary persuasion to winning more support from the national minorities.

This campaign also reached the minorities in the South and, in 1946, the Viet Minh organized a Minorities Fair in Ban me thuot and a Congress in Pleiku. Ho Chi Minh, unable to attend the "very happy family-gathering" sent to his "Compatriots of national minorities" a special letter which proved again that Ho had mastered the art of persuasion:

I am far from you, yet my heart and that of the government is always by your side.

Compatriots of the Kinh majority people or of the Tho, Muong or Man, Djarai or Ede, Sedan or Bana, and other minorities, are all Viet Nam's children and therefore blood brothers and sisters to one another. Close to one another we always remain, in happiness and in trials, during life as well as at the hour of death. In affluence or in want, we must help each other.

In the past, we were kept apart because first, of our lack of communications, and secondly, of the discord and division someone had set between us.

Today, Viet Nam is our common country.... Then, all nationalities must closely unite to safeguard our Fatherland and support our government.

We must love, respect and help one another to secure our common happiness and that of our offspring.

Rivers may dry up, or mountains wear away, but our solidarity will never decrease. 137

b) With the Laotians and the Cambodians.

From the beginning of the Indochinese Communist Party, the Comintern had advised the Vietnamese Communists to form a single bloc with the Laotian and Cambodian peoples. The underground newsletter Công Nông Binh (Worker, Peasant, Soldier) has explained this policy in an authoritative way:

Though Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos are different in race, language, customs, and way of life, they form indeed a single bloc.

Economic relations between the three countries are important: natural products must be exchanged to answer the needs of the people; communication lines and sea ports should be shared to make possible the life and activities of each country, which would be unfeasible if they were completely separated from one another.

In the political sphere, those three countries were all occupied by the French and suffered the same rule and the same oppressive, exploiting system of the same empire....

Hence, the proletariat and the oppressed people in the three countries, Viet Nam, Cao Mien, Lao, must absolutely unite to achieve their aspirations for freedom.... Since the enemy of revolution has a

unified central power which administers the whole of Indochina, the Communist Party, likewise, must concentrate the forces of Indochina's proletariat in a unified front, under the leadership of the Indochinese proletariat in order to be on the same ground with its enemy. Therefore, the name Vietnamese Communist Party, should be changed into Indochinese Communist Party. 138

The eighth Plenum of the I.C.P. in May 1941, also reaffirmed the necessity of all Indochina's unity:

To achieve the liberation of all Indochina's people, all revolutionary forces of Indochina... must be united together. The alliance of all the forces of all classes and parties, of revolutionary groups and all anti-Japanese peoples, is essential to our Party. 139

During the resistance war, the Communist Party made continuous efforts to create a common front of Viet-Mien-Lao, by retaining a small faction of Laotians and Cambodians in the anti-French struggle:

We are waging our Resistance war; the brother Cambodian and Laotian nations are also waging theirs. The French colonialists and the American interventionists are the common enemy of our three nations. Consequently we must strive to help our Cambodian and Laotian brothers and their resistance wars, and arrive at the establishment of a Viet-Mien-Lao Front. 140

Of that Viet-Mien-Lao Front, Ho Chi Minh spoke proudly to the Congress at which the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet Fronts merged together:

What makes me happier is that not only the entire Vietnamese people are united, but the Cambodian and Laotian peoples are also united. The news of the unity of these two brother nations is brought personally by the Cambodian and Laotian delegates.

Thus the Vietnamese people are united, the Cambodian people are united and the Laotian people are united. Let us strive for a Vietnamese-Cambodian-Laotian unity. 141

This Viet-Mien-Lao unity has made it possible for Ta Quang Buu, vice-minister of Defence of Ho's government, to sign the Geneva "Agreements of the Cessation of Hostilities" in July 1954, not only in the name of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, but also in the names of the joint-command of the Cambodian Resistance Front and of the Pathet Lao.

Also, in the name of that unity, Hanoi has established the Ho Chi Minh trail, sent her troops to fight in Laos, Cambodia, and used those two countries as sanctuaries to mount attacks on South Viet Nam. It was this strategic need that gave rise to the new "Alliance of Indochinese people against American imperialism", after the coup d'etat in Cambodia that deposed Prince Sihanouk.

c) With Russia and the Socialist camp.

Since Communism came to Viet Nam from Moscow and Ho Chi Minh, the founder and leader of the Indochinese Communist Party was trained in Moscow, North Viet Nam has

maintained a long lasting and loyal alliance with the Soviet and other Socialist Governments as well as the revolutionary movement in various countries.

This was expressed in one of the ten major slogans of the Communist Party:

Support for the USSR, unity with the world proletariat and the revolutionary movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries. 142

This slogan was repeated every year on the commemoration day of the October Revolution, and developed in newspaper articles and letter of support sent to Moscow.

Relating the successes of the August 1945 Revolution and of the resistance war victory of the Soviet Red Army and the friendly assistance of other Socialist countries, Ho Chi Minh gave an authoratitive report at the second national congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party (February 1951):

The democratic camp headed by the Soviet Union includes the socialist countries, and the new democracies in Europe and in Asia. It also embraces the oppressed nations which are struggling against aggressive imperialism, and the democratic organisations and personalities in the capitalist countries.

The democratic camp is a powerful camp which is growing in strength.

....From Eastern Europe to Eastern Asia the USSR and the new democracies form an

immense bloc of 800 million people. In this bloc the nations are united, having the same goal and without any antagonisms. It is the symbol of progress and of the bright future of mankind. This is an extremely powerful force.

...This is the United Front of the peaceful and democratic world. This is a very powerful force whose intensity is growing every day. 143

This purely optimistic picture of a "democratic, peaceful and powerful world" was relentlessly repeated, reproduced, translated into paintings, songs, movies, plays, posters, banners, carticles, books, and slogans, and exclusively funneled into the minds of people through eyes and ears, day after day and year after yea.

Of course, the powerful state censorship produced only one-way information and the ordinary people in North Viet Nam could not hear about the tragic events of "Budapest, 1956", "Prague, 1968", the sad cases of Pasternak, Solzh-enitsyn, Alleluiva Stalin, nor about the protesters who vanished (Vadim Delone, Konstantin Babitsky, Larissa Daniel, Pavel Litvinov, Natalya Gorbanevshaya and so forth). 144 Moreover, the magnificent Viet-Trung-Xo^{Hà}-Nghì (Vietnamese-Chinese-Soviet Friendship) Front might strengthen the people's conviction that "in this bloc the nations are united.... without any antagonisms".

In more practical terms, Truong Chinh in a speech delivered on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Party, explained one of the immediate tasks of Viet Nam:

The Vietnamese people should strengthen solidarity with the people of the socialist camp, with the Soviet Union as the centre, because the peoples of these countries are their closest brothers in the international arena. Not only did they actively support us in our revolution and resistance War but since the restoration of peace, they have also been wholeheartedly helping us in building socialism in North Viet Nam and warmly supporting our struggle for peaceful reunification of our country.... Each Vietnamese must clearly realize that solidarity and cooperation with the brother countries in the great socialist family is a firm guarantee for the success of the building of socialism in North Viet Nam and the struggle for the reunification of the country. 145

That celebrated Marxist theoretician also explained the "how" and "why" of the mutual support between Viet Nam and the colonial or semi-colonial countries:

The Vietnamese people must strengthen solidarity with the colonial and semi-colonial countries. By conducting the revolution to overthrow the imperialists and liberate themselves the Vietnamese people weaken the enemies of other colonial peoples. That is why we must call upon other colonial peoples to rise up and together oppose the common enemy. The people of other colonies support our revolutionary cause, therefore it is our duty to support theirs. 146

After the Soviet Union, China has been the closest ally of North Viet Nam. This becomes obvious if geograph-

ical, historical, cultural and economic conditions are taken into consideration.

Since 1923, when Ho Chi Minh, under different names, came to China with the Borodin delegation as a member of the Third International, a strong tie has been developed between the two revolutionary movements, Chinese and Vietnamese. It was in China that the Indochinese Communist Party was born and its early activities took place. It was China that gave Ho shelter, a platform, experience in the application of Marxism-Leninism, together with several powerful comrades who, after their successful revolution in 1949, were the first ones officially to recognize Ho's government and wholeheartedly to help the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam to win the anti-French war at Dien Bien Phu.

Little wonder that after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Ho in his message of congratulation to Mao, solemnly reaffirmed:

Brotherly relations have existed between the Vietnamese and Chinese nations during thousands of years of history. Henceforth these relations will be even closer for the development of the freedom and happiness of our two nations, as well as for the safeguard of world democracy and lasting peace. 147

No doubt, the Chinese victory confirmed the Vietnamese Communists' full confidence in their final victory and greatly favoured their decision of letting the Indochinese Communist Party emerge (under the name of Viet Nam Workers'

Party) at its second National Congress in February 1951. At the Congress Ho happily related the Vietnamese Revolution to that of China and Russia as well:

The October Revolution was victorious. The building of Socialism in the Soviet Union has been successful. The Chinese Revolution has been successful. These great successes have opened the way to success for our revolution and that of many other countries in the world. 148

Footnotes to chapter IV

1. Ho Chi Minh, Học Tập Lý Luận và Chính Trị (pamphlet), (Hanoi: Su That, 1966), p.16
2. Vietnamese Communist documents prior to 1960 said the Party had come into being on 6 January 1930. But the Third National Congress of the Vietnamese Workers' Party "passed a resolution" correcting that date as being 3 February 1930.
3. See, for example, Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe Tinh (Hanoi, 1960), pp. 13-14, p.42.
4. Ibid., p.27; supra, chapter II, footnote 9.
5. Les Soviets du Nghe Tinh, pp.51-54; Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, (Hanoi, 1960), pp.34-37
6. Truong Chinh, Forward along the Path charted by K. Marx. (Hanoi, 1969), p.79
7. "Những giai đoạn lịch sử trong 40 năm hoạt động của Đảng", Hanoi Moi, (Hanoi, 22 January 1970), p.2; Truong Chinh, Forward along... p.80 ff.
8. Breaking our chains (Hanoi, 1960) p.10
9. Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, (Hanoi, 1963), pp.32-35 ff
10. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.14
11. Cf. The conversation of Hoang quoc Viet and a prominent South American Communist, in P.J. Honey, "The National United Front in Viet Nam", Studies in Comparative Communism (An Interdisciplinary Journal) vol.2 n.1, January 1969, (University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California: 1969), p.81.
12. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.15. See also Truong Chinh, Resolutely Taking the North Viet Nam Countryside to Socialism through Agricultural

Cooperation, Hanoi, 1959, p.31; Truong Chinh, Cách mạng tháng Mười và cuộc tranh đấu của nhân dân Việt Nam cho độc lập, dân tộc, dân chủ nhân dân và chủ nghĩa xã hội (The October Revolution and the Vietnamese people's struggle for national independence, people's democracy and socialism), (Hanoi: Su that, 1957) pp.29-30; Kinh Tế Việt Nam (Vietnamese Economy), (Hanoi: 1960), p.129

13. Đường Cách Mệnh (The Road to Revolution), a pamphlet published in 1926 in ~~Hanoi~~ in Canton, China, as a study document for the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association. It was later reprinted in Văn kiện lịch sử Đảng (Historical Documents of the Party). Recently it was reproduced in Hanoi Mới, 7 January 1970, p.2
14. Thirty Years of Struggle, p.15; Truong Chinh, Forward along the Path charted by K. Marx, p.84; Hoang quoc Viet, loc.cit.
15. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.14.
16. Truong Chinh, Forward along...K.Marx, p.85.
17. Truong Chinh, March ahead under the Party's Banner, pp.35-36.
18. Truong Chinh, Forward along...K.Marx, pp.86-87.
19. Ibid.
20. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.248.
21. 3 February 1930 is now recognised as the official birth date of the Party.
22. Cách Mạng Tháng Mười và Cách Mạng Việt Nam (Hanoi: Su That, 1967), p.21.
23. Ibid., p.33. See the photocopy of the original Tranh Đấu, opposite to page 17 in the same book.

24. Ibid., pp.31-32.
25. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.25. Italics added.
26. Ibid., Italics added.
27. Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner (Hanoi, 1963), pp.34-35;
Towards the Realization of Agrarian Reform (Hanoi, 1955), pp.33-34
28. Truong Chinh, Forward along the Path charted by K.Marx, p.82. Here a fourth measure was mentioned: "voluntary offer of land" to the government. This will result practically in the same thing, the loss of private land without compensation. But, this "peaceful measure" was, in principle, reserved as a favour for a few landlords who had wholeheartedly cooperated with the revolutionaries.
29. Zone IV included three provinces, Thanh hoa, Nghe an and Ha tinh. From this author's personal experience, there was not even an oral mention of the "compulsory purchase" measure. There was, indeed, much difference between the published words of the land policy and the real practice as seen in North Viet Nam. It was rather naked terror ending with the public tortures of several landlords and the killing of two or three in each village.
30. This delicate practice was also applied to the communal land and the properties of churches. Rf. Kinh Tế Viet Nam (Viet Nam Economy), published by the Economic Department, State Commission of Science, (Hanoi: Su That, 1960), pp.74-76
31. P.J.Honey, "The National United Front in Viet Nam", Studies in Comparative Communist, (Los Angeles, Calif.: University of Southern California), Vol.2 n.1 (January 1969), pp.82-83; Cf. Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.75; Le Tan Tien, Nhìn lại

những bước đường Lịch Sử Của Đảng, (Hanoi, 1965),
p.35

32. Kinh Tế Việt Nam (Hanoi, 1960), p.139
33. Truong Chinh, Resolutely taking the North Viet Nam countryside to socialism through Agricultural co-operation (Hanoi, 1959), p.7; Kinh te Viet Nam, p.68
34. Kinh Tế Viet Nam, pp.133-138
35. Ibid., p.200
36. P.J. Honey, "The National United Front in Viet Nam", Studies in Comparative Communism, vol.2, n.1 (January 1969), p.88
37. Kinh Tế Viet Nam, p.203
38. Ibid., p.99
39. Ibid., pp.205-206. "Redeeming" here should be understood as "compulsory purchase."
40. Ibid., p.230
41. Ibid., pp.101, 198-199, 206, 210, 223-227, 231-233.
42. Ibid., p.210. Italics added
43. Ibid., p.231. See also pages 227-228.
44. Ibid., p.229. Italics added.
45. Truong Chinh, "Some General Principles of the New Culture Movement," article written on illegal papers of the Communist Party in 1944, reproduced later in Ban về Văn Hóa và Văn nghệ (Culture and Fine Arts), (Hanoi, 1964), p.29

46. Truong Chinh, "The Standpoint of the Marxist Culture", an excerpt from Marxism and Vietnamese Culture, n.pl., 1949, reproduced in Ban ve Van hoa va Van nghe, pp.34-35
47. Ibid., pp.42-43
48. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (Hanoi, 1961), vol.III, p.292
49. Ibid., p.293
50. Ban ve Van hoa va Van nghe, p.61 Italics added.
51. Ibid., pp.116-118
52. Ibid., pp.230-234. Italics added.
53. Truông Chinh, Forward Along the Path Charted by K.Marx, (Hanoi, 1969), p.74 and pp.76-77. Italics added.
54. Tran Huy Lieu, Lịch Sử Tám Mươi Năm Chống Pháp (Hanoi: Van Su Dia, 1958) Vol II, part 1, p.144
55. Tran Huy Lieu, op. cit., Vol II, part 2 (1961), p.37
56. Ibid., pp.199-200
57. Communication from Bao Dai in private interview.
58. Đoàn Thêm, Những Ngày Chưa Quên (Saigon, 1967), p.138
59. Vo Nguyen Giap, Những Năm Tháng Không Thế Nào Quên (Hanoi, 1970), p.115
60. Dân Quốc, (a Hanoi daily newspaper), No.84 (12 December 1945). The estimated price of rice on the market was about 800 piasters for 100 kgms.
61. Nguyễn Phút Tân, A Modern History of Viet Nam (Saigon, Khai Tri Publishing House, 1964), p.470.
62. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. II, p.158

63. See the introduction and the complete text of the press release in the Hanoi publication, Breaking Our Chains (Hanoi, 1960), pp.82-83
64. See Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, p.75: "Our party helped Duong Duc Hien's group of students and the Thanh Nghi group found the Viet Nam Democratic Party, which joined the Viet Minh Front;" Le Tan Tien, Lich Su Cua Dang (Hanoi, 1965), p.35
65. Breaking Our Chains, pp.83-84.
66. Breaking Our Chains (Documents on the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945), (Hanoi, 1960, p.86) Italics added.
67. Ibid., p.92, (The address was made on 27 August 1945) Italics added.
68. See lists of Government members in appendix C₁ C₂.
69. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, III pp.246-247
70. Breaking Our Chains, p.99. Italics added.
71. Nghiem Kế Tô, Viet Nam Mau Lua (Saigon, Mai Linh, 1954, pp.41 and 80) See also Tran Huy Lieu, Lich Su Tam Muoi Nam Chong Phap, Vol.II, part 2, pp.21-22, 123, 164-165, 167-168, 171-175, 180, 219
72. Tran Huy Lieu, op. cit., pp.145, 150
73. Nguyen Phut Tan, A Modern History Of Viet Nam, pp.474-475. Tran Huy Lieu, Lich Su Tam Muoi Nam Chong Phap, Vol. II, part 2, pp.190-191
74. Tran Huy Lieu, Ibid., pp.145-152
75. See map of Territories occupied by the four parties in Nguyen Phut Tan, op. cit., Appendix: Political Situation in North Viet Nam as of September 1945.

76. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. III, p.51.
77. Ibid., p.52
78. Ibid.
79. Le Tan Tien, Nhung Buoc Duong Lich su cua Dang, (Hanoi, Su That, 1965), p.35.
80. See the list in Nghiem Ke To, Viet Nam Mau Lua, p.44.
81. Nghiem Ke To, Viet Nam Mau Lua, p.57.
82. Bernard Fall, Le Viet Minh 1945-1960 (Paris, Collins, 1960) p.50; cf. Nghiem Ke To, op.cit., pp.80, 85, 86, 97, 163 - Doan Them, op.cit., pp.53, 90-91; Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., pp.123, 148, 164-180 (passim); Hanoi Khoi Nghia (Hanoi, 1966), p.63; Nguyen Phut Tan, A Modern History of Viet Nam, p.530-531.
83. Dan Chu, (a Viet Minh newspaper), No.95 (13 December 1945); Dan Quoc (Hanoi newspaper), No.85 (13 December 1945).
84. Hanoi Khoi Nghia (Hanoi, 1966), pp.61-69.
85. Nghiem Ke To, op.cit., p.97.
86. Le Tan Tien, op.cit., p.51.
87. See the list in Nghiem Ke To, op.cit., p.69.
88. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol.III, pp.77-78. See also Ho's speech to the National Congress of the Viet Minh League in 1948: Ibid., p.149.
89. The satires of Tu Mo, that had appeared on Viet Minh newspapers, were later published in book form: Tu Mo, But Chien Dau (1947-1954) (Hanoi: Van Hoc, 2nd Edition, 1960). Out of 105 satires in this book, ten are directly aimed at Bao Dai.

90. Ibid., p.13
91. Ibid., p.40
92. Translation from the text given by Đổng Tung, a former comrade of Ho Chi Minh.
93. Le Tan Tien, Những Bước Đường Lịch Sử của Đảng (Hanoi, 1965) p.35
94. Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner (Hanoi, 1963), p.49
95. The 1930 Political Theses of the Indochinese Communist Party, reproduced in Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Hanoi, 5 January 1970. See also excerpts in Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., Volume II, part 1, p.31. Italics added.
96. Quân Đội Nhân Dân, Hanoi, 24 January 1970.
97. rf. Le Tan Tien; Nhìn lại.... Lịch sử của Đảng, p.29; Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., II,2, p.43
98. See an account of the underground Cultural Association 1943-1945 by Vu Quoc Uy in Hà Nội Khởi Nghĩa (Hanoi, 1966), pp.121-173
99. Tran Huy Lieu, Tám Mươi Năm Chống Pháp, II, 2, p.105
100. Ibid., p.105
101. Ibid., p.106
102. Hà Nội Khởi Nghĩa, pp.132-133
103. Ibid., pp.133-166
104. Rf. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., p.145
105. Cao Đài (literally: High Platform, meaning Supreme Being) is a syncretic form of worship, combining Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Spiritualism and Magic. With a headquarters in

Tay Ninh the Cao Dai claimed a fellowship of nearly two million, including a small private army which was incorporated into the national army of South Viet Nam in 1955.

106. Hòa Hảo (literally: Harmonized or Moderated for Better) is a form of Simplified Buddhism, very popular in the Chau Doc and Long Xuyen provinces. Its small private army was finally dissolved in 1955.
107. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., pp.150-151, see also pp.146-152, 190-197.
108. Ibid., pp.151, 197
109. Giao Hoi Phat Giao Hoa Hao, Tiểu sử và Giáo lý của Đức Huỳnh Giáo Chủ (Saigon, 1966), p.9
110. Hà Nội Khởi Nghĩa (Hanoi, 1966), p.54
111. Hội Ký Cách Mạng (Hanoi, 1964), p.120
112. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., II, 2, p.142
113. Hanoi Khởi Nghĩa, p.123
114. Ibid., p.141
115. Nguyễn Văn Cần, Công Giáo và Công Sản (Saigon, 1956), p.19, footnote (17).
116. Nguyen Hồng Phong, Tìm hiểu Tính cách Dân tộc (Hanoi, 1963), p.220. See also pp.215-216 and pp.220-235
117. Nguyen Van Cần, op.cit., p.22
118. Studies in Comparative Communism, vol.2, n.1 (January 1969), p.93
119. Vo Nguyen Giap, Những năm tháng không thể nào quên (Hanoi, 1970), p.39

120. Le Bulletin des Missions (Bruges, 1946), pp.39-40
121. Ibid.
122. Messages (Hanoi: Edition de l'Office d'Information de la Republique du Viet Nam, 1946).
123. Nhung loi keu goi cua Ho Chu Tich, vol.I (1941-1949), (Hanoi: Su That, 2nd edition, 1958), p.33.
124. Dan Chu, n.106 (25 December 1945).
125. Communication from Đồng Tùng, a former comrade of Ho Chi Minh.
126. Nhung loi keu goi cua Ho Chu Tich, vol.I, p.280
127. Ibid., p.325
128. The mass protests took place in Tay Ho (Huong Khe, Ha Tinh), in Lang Nghi and in Hung Yen (Nghe An). In the "Hung Yen rebellion", it took a whole regiment of well equipped regular troops to overwhelm the peasants who had been forced to fight only with swords and lances. The real motivation of the rebellion was the excessive agricultural taxation and other oppressive policies of the communist government.
129. See, for example, Tú Mỡ, Bút Chiến Đấu, pp.116-118
130. Truong Chinh, Resolutely taking the North Viet Nam countryside to socialism through agricultural co-operation (Hanoi, 1959), pp.24-25
131. Truong Chinh, Forward along the Path charted by K. Marx, (Hanoi, 1969), p.82
132. Tran Huy Lieu, 80 nam chong Phap, vol.II, 2, p.89
133. Ibid., pp.89, 102
134. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, pp.146-147
135. Ibid.

136. Dân Chủ (Viet minh newspaper), **No.**90 (7 December 1945)
137. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Workes, vol.III, pp.62-63
138. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., vol.II,1, pp.35-36
139. Ibid., p.71
140. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., p.264
141. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., p.272
142. Tran Huy Lieu, op.cit., vol.II,1, p.31
143. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., vol.III, p.257. Italics added.
144. Observer Sunday magazine, 6 February 1972.
145. Truồng Chinh, March Ahead under the Party's Banner (Hanoi, 1963), p.56
146. Ibid., pp.56-57
147. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., vol.III, p.184
148. Ibid., p.266

Chapter V

Conflicts, Resistance, Negotiation and the Theme of Hoa de tien (Concilliation for future advance)

In August 1945, the Viet Minh exerted every effort to seize power and to establish a Government before the arrival of the Allied Forces. They achieved great success in North and Central Viet Nam, as is shown by the transfer of power in Hue (30 August 1945) and the Proclamation of Independence (2 September 1945) in Hanoi.

In the South, however, they encountered an entirely different situation. Since the failure of the Nam Ky Insurrection (November 1940) and the subsequent French repression which shattered all the Communist organisations then existing in Cochinchina, the Communists had still not fully recovered by the time of the Japanese troops' surrender. By dint of astute political manoeuvres, Tran Van Giau succeeded in assuming the chairmanship of the National United Front, in which capacity he organised in Saigon a huge demonstration to greet the National Independence proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi on the same day (2 September 1945). Some shots were fired, which induced panic among the densely packed crowds, after which disorders broke out with widespread shooting, looting, and robbery: it was reported that most victims of the incident were Frenchmen, including Father Tricoire, who was killed on the steps of the Cathedral. While Viet Minh and French representatives

blamed one another, the French and foreign residents of Saigon were seized by fear and awaited the arrival of French troops with growing anxiety. ¹

Four days after the incident, a British mission under the command of General Douglas D. Gracey, reached Saigon. The British commander at once requested the Japanese troops to help restore order in Saigon, imposed military curfew from 9:30 p.m., to 5:30 a.m., so as to avoid any more violent encounters, and outlawed further public meetings, demonstrations, and the carrying of arms.

Later the British mission opened the prison doors to free all political prisoners within, most of these being French troops incarcerated by the Japanese, with a few others, French and Vietnamese, placed there by the Viet Minh.

The simmering antagonism between Vietnamese and French flared up unexpectedly on 23 September 1945, when French troops suddenly occupied all public buildings throughout the city and assumed control of Saigon. A statement by the British mission deplored "the manner in which this 'coup d'etat' was executed", the "counter-measures taken by the Vietnamese" and the "reprisals" and "violent treatment" enacted by the "more emotional of the French citizens". ²

This incident clearly indicated France's intention to re-establish her control in Viet Nam and, at the same time, marked the beginning of the resistance war

in Nam Bộ (South Viet Nam or Cochinchina), and of an abundant literature of political persuasion which can be grouped under the emotive theme of anti-colonialism.

Resistance in the South.

When the French occupied Saigon, the Provisional Executive Committee left the city and shortly afterwards, at the insistence of its Communist leader Tran Van Giàu, was transformed into the Ủy Ban Nhân Dân Nam Bộ (People's Committee of the South). Later on the body again changed its title to Ủy Ban Kháng Chiến Nam Bộ (Resistance Committee in the South), and appointed Nguyễn Bình (alias Nguyễn Phưởng Thảo) as its military commander.

On 26 September 1945, when the people of Saigon were faced with a tragic situation and disturbed by numbers of conflicting rumours, Tiếng Nói Việt Nam (Voice of Viet Nam) a programme broadcast by Hanoi Radio Station, brought to them a clear and moving message from President Ho Chi Minh. This masterly and well timed speech merits close analysis.

At the beginning, the attention of listeners was immediately seized by a note of great urgency.

Dear southern compatriots!
Our newly-won national independence is threatened by
foreign invasion....The
French colonialists....are coming back....They still want to
dominate our people once more. 3

Instead of directly calling on his listeners to

fight, Ho expressed his and the entire nation's confidence in the noble patriotism of "the southern compatriots" who will certainly know how to react. However, to counter a possible objection from the French side, Ho spoke in praise of a French hero:

I trust, as do my compatriots throughout the country, in the unalterable patriotism of our southern compatriots. We all should bear in mind the inspiring words of a heroic French revolutionary: "I'd rather die free than live in bonds". 4

Thereupon, Ho promised his fighting compatriots the thing they most needed, namely support; support from the Government, the Nation and the whole world:

I am certain, and our southern compatriots should also be certain, that the Government as well as compatriots throughout the country will totally support the combatants and the people who are making sacrifices in their struggle to defend national independence. I am certain, and all our compatriots are certain, that in the whole world, individuals and nations who cherish equality and freedom, will all take our side. 5

Like a general addressing his soldiers on the field of battle, the veteran revolutionary leader, who had once borne the name *Tất Thành* (Who Must Succeed), signalled victory and cheered his compatriots with two stirring promises:

Victory shall be ours because
our entire people are solidly
united behind us. Victory is
certain because we struggle
for a just cause. 6

The speech might appropriately have ended on that high note, for that would have enhanced its popular appeal, but Ho was anxious to inject an element of psychological warfare as well. The Viet Minh had been blamed ⁷ for the atrocities and murders of 2 September and for the hideous massacre in the European quarter (Tan Dinh, Saigon) of 24 - 25 September 1945. Ho now found it expedient to make an indirect disavowal of responsibility for such conduct:

I want to recommend to our southern compatriots just one thing: Any Frenchmen captured in the course of the war must be carefully guarded, but we must also treat them generously. We must show to the world, and to the French people in particular, that we want only independence and freedom, that we are not struggling out of personal enmities or rancour. We must show to the world that we are an intelligent people, more civilized than the homicidal invaders.

That diplomatic postscript also served both to allay apprehensions in the Allied missions to Viet Nam, and to cause mental unease to people in France and elsewhere over the behaviour of French troops in Indochina.

To heighten the morale of their southern compatriots and to prolong the euphoric effect of Ho's eloquent appeal - to say nothing of increasing his personal prestige, the Communist cadres in the South issued a fresh slogan containing a newly-coined name for Saigon: "Struggle to defend the Ho Chi Minh City".⁸

With the twin objectives of fomenting Vietnamese hostility towards the French and soliciting forces now fighting in the South, the newspaper Cờ Giải Phóng (Liberation Banner), organ of the Indo-chinese Communist Party, published the following accounts of the incidents:

On 2 September 1945, at about noon, French residents and British prisoners of war caused provocation by opening fire on 500,000 Vietnamese who were enthusiastically participating in an "Independence Day" celebration. The Vietnamese guards to whose care the lives of more than half a million empty handed citizens including women, children and old persons had been committed, were obliged to react. As a result, our people suffered 47 casualties (wounded and killed) while those who provoked the violence suffered only 7. However, more than 20 French murderers were arrested on the spot and imprisoned.⁹

Three weeks later, after negotiations had failed, the same newspaper prepared people for what it termed

"The new stage":

The shooting has started again in the South. It was caused by the determination of the returning French colonialists to reimpose their domination on the Indochinese people, and to contrive to exploit them. Blood is once more being shed, and the People's Committee of the South absolutely denies any responsibility for the conflict....After the failure of negotiations from 2 to 8 October 1945, between the French and the Committee of the South with the mediation of General Gracey, commander of the British mission, war may well rage with greater intensity. Our Saigon compatriots have been ordered to leave the city, our troops have entered the city to cause destruction, and a general strike still continues. A double blockade, economic and military, has tightened the ring around Saigon city. The French invaders are suffering from lack of food, electricity and water.The Committee of the South has issued the order to shoot and kill any French soldier who ventures to follow the British forces out of Saigon.The resistance of our southern compatriots has entered a new stage which will be more tense and critical. Our people in the South are wholeheartedly united in their support for the national resistance. All over the country, an anti-French tide is running highWe should always be willing to

brave every difficulty and danger, to sustain a protracted resistance until the end, which will come with the complete liberation of our country and the total independence of our nation. 10

On 25 October 1945, a very important conference of the Southern Section of the Indochinese Communist Party was held in Mỹ-Tho province in the presence of Lê Duẩn (known as Anh Ba), Tôn Đức Thắng, and Hoàng Quốc Việt who had arrived from Hanoi in mid-August, as representative of the Tổng Bộ (Headquarter) Viet Minh. This Regional Conference passed several fundamental resolutions concerning the resistance war and the establishment of the Party's leadership over the armed forces.

On 5 November 1945, the Communist organ Cờ Giải Phóng No.31, printed a detailed report from "a combatant who had participated in the resistance of the South". The article began by analysing the troublesome events that had caused much damage and taken the lives of five Frenchmen, including that of Father Tricoire, on the 2 September:

Three points should be noted:
 a) French colonialists opened fire from the church and the French priests' house so as to provoke us into killing priests and destroying the church. That would provide them with the evidence they needed to request the Allied Power to intervene.
 b) When shots rang out from French houses, our men went in to investigate and found drunk British soldiers inside. In this way, the French colonialists deliberately enticed us to kill British men so that that might bring about a British intervention.

c) In the evening, French colonialists hired some gangsters to commit house-breaking, burglary, and looting against French homes so that they might falsely accuse the Viet Minh of plunder. 11

Similarly, the Viet Minh "combatant" accused the British mission of triggering off troubles and conniving at the French re-conquest of Saigon. This allegation was obviously intended to justify the "task of self-defence":

The mission indirectly incited some journalists to criticize the British army and the British Government, and tricked the Trotskyts into disseminating leaflets and marching in an armed demonstration, fomenting violence against Frenchment. They did that to prove our government's incapacity to administer the city. In the evening of 22 September and early the next morning, British troops set out to occupy police posts, the city hall, the Republican Guard's barracks and other public buildings. The British went ahead and the French followed them. That was the beginning of the battle. The task of self-defence was imposed upon us. 12

The report went on to explain the loss of Saigon and the suburbs, the application of "scorched earth" tactics and guerilla warfare, and the system of resistance organized by the Communist Party. The Communists then vowed to fight a protracted war of attrition in which the outcome could only be a victory for Viet Nam. In this struggle, they were willing to accept casualties in the ratio of ten to one:

The South is ready to sacrifice ten thousand men to kill one thousand Frenchmen, or even one million to kill a hundred thousand.

We could bear the loss of a hundred thousand or a million men, but the French can never stand the loss of fifty or thirty thousand troops in South Viet Nam.

This is a war of attrition, a protracted war, the only winner will be the Vietnamese people. 13

In evaluating the work of preparation, the Viet Minh report listed the following weaknesses:

Before the fighting started, we had failed to sabotage electric and water supplies, to take away money from the national treasury, and we left a number of Viet Gian (traitors) in the Saigon prisons. Our Government was too lenient with the traitors, thus tolerating many who would later become agents for the French. We also failed to demolish many public buildings, palaces, and bases. 14

That high level "combatant" placed on the credit side, the "careful and reserved attitude" of the Resistance Committee of the South. That remark proved to be correct in its application to the resistance war (1945-1954).

It is illuminating to compare the conclusions of the Vietnamese Communist leaders in 1945 with those reached in 1968 (the Tet offensive) or 1972 (the Easter offensive):

While the para-military and the shock troops were eager for a general offensive and an all-out attack on the city, the

Resistance Committee of the South did not blindly follow the mass's opinion, but weighing one strategy against the other, it chose to adopt a protracted resistance. This was the right decision. To reoccupy Saigon city, would have required a force three times larger than that of the defenders. A policy of staking all on the hope of immediate victory would have resulted only in defeat. 15

Thus, according to Vo Nguyen Giap, the Party decided to rely totally upon guerilla tactics, quickly to send several units of the Liberation Army with outstanding "comrade commanders," and also several teams of cadres, to the South.

Simultaneously, a strong movement was promoted all over the country to master support for the resistance in the South. "The whole nation turned to Saigon," Giap asserted in his memoirs, "grimly determined to fight aggression and to defend the fatherland". 16

Newspapers and loudspeakers in Hanoi gave the news of success and victory in the South, of the growing enthusiastic support among people in the North and Centre, of the increasing number of volunteers to help the Southern compatriots, and also described the departure ceremonies of Liberation units in many areas. Good examples, courageous deeds and heroic gestures were very well publicised for the purpose of national motivation.

General Giap still savoured the memory of those exciting days, when he recorded in his recently published memoirs:

During the last days of September, in Hanoi, a large crowd was always present in front of loudspeakers, waiting for news from Nam Bo.

The youth were eager to join the army, longing for the opportunity to join the struggle in the South to eliminate enemies. In some families, both father and son applied together for military service. Even Buddhist monks cast off their religious robes and volunteered to kill the enemy. Thus, the Liberation forces were growing very fast.From the North, many Liberation units started their Southward journey at the same time.The new Government and the people took pains to lavish on their "sons" leaving for the battle-front the best weapons available brand-new uniforms, warm pullovers, leather shoes, and bonnets shining with golden stars. Huge crowds poured into railroad stations to bid farewell to the combatants. Compatriots in the Northern and Central zones offered to those in the South, their own children as an expression of their affection and heartfelt support. 17

Internal Unity for Resistance.

Affection and support, however, did not come uniformly from all elements of the population. The Việt Nam, Thiệt Thúc (Realist) and Đồng Tâm (United Hearts) newspapers of the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach

(Nationalist and Revolutionary) Political Parties, published some unflattering news about the Southern battles and vehemently criticized the Communist Viet Minh for numerous mistakes as well as for implementing a partisan policy of eliminating other nationalist leaders.

The first issue of Su That (Truth), the Vietnamese 'Pravda', that succeeded the Co Giai Phong (Liberation Banner) after the "dissolution" of the Indochinese Communist Party, carried, on 5 December 1945, a bitter retort from the "Indochinese Marxists" (the new name for the Communist Party after its 'dissolution'). The line of argument in this "Open Letter to the Nationalist Party" was predictably based on the war situation. Thus, the reply began with a statement of the unchallengeable principle of national unity:

While waging the offensive in the South and the Lower Part of Central Viet Nam, the French colonialists are poised to bring their troops into the North. The Fatherland is endangered. The whole nation must be closely united to oppose the aggressors. Divided, you will fall, but united, you will survive. 18

From that indisputable statement, which called to mind the famous declaration of the ex-Emperor Bao Dai, the Marxist group went on to utter veiled threats contained in a justification of their policy of violently eliminating those nationalist leaders who did not agree

with their policies:

You call for union and co-operation. Well, the entire people and ourselves, we want it. But the people and ourselves, we can practice "union and co-operation" only with those who are loyal to the national interests, and not with those traitors who have been hiding themselves among your ranks...National interests and national honour require us to reserve a severe punishment for them...Regretfully, the seven principles that the Viet Quoc, Viet Minh and Viet Cach agreed upon on 19 November 1945, did not include the not unimportant point that the "patriotic organizations must co-operate with one another, to eliminate traitors". You maintain that "no one should ever open fire on his Vietnamese compatriots" (Viet Nam newspaper No.10). Don't you realize that to grasp our independence, it is necessary to shoot down not only the foreign enemies, but also the enemies within, i.e. traitors? As you well know, that painful necessity has been confirmed by the history of any national revolution. We do not say that all the members of the Dai Viet Quoc Xa (Socio-Nationalist Party for Greater Viet Nam) the Cao Dai religious sect, and the Phat Thay's congregation, are traitors. Many among them, being honest but lacking political clear-sightedness, were deceived by their traitorous leaders. There are, at present, some real traitors who disguise themselves under the labels of Viet Quoc

and Viet Cach, to evade the punishment from our people and the Government. 20

Following this minatory apologia for their conduct towards the nationalist, the Communists, went on to invoke their leadership of the national government and the state of emergency that government had proclaimed as their authorities for silencing all critics and opponents, for suspending the exercise of civil and human rights, and for introducing their policy of single-party rule, which they intended to establish as a permanent institution:

Under the leadership of the Viet Minh, our people have regained national power....The most important tasks of our people at the present time are to remain united and to mobilize all the available forces for national resistance.... So long as the country is waging a resistance war, anyone who is "anti-resistance", must be condemned by a military court. Are you ignorant of the name of that crime?....As far as freedom of speech is concerned, we all know that in wartime, every government in the world, even the most democratic, has to impose censorship, or even direct control, on the pressRegretably, your newspaper lacks judgment and is undisciplined.... Our people will never approve of the way you exercise freedom, because it is not really freedom of speech that you practice, but rather freedom of suicide. Who is directing the resistance war? The Government is....

Yet you insult the Resistance Government....You shout:
 "Down with the Government!"
You are self-professed revolutionaries, so how can you serve the cause of French colonialism in this deplorable fashion? 21

For the sake of independence, therefore, the Vietnamese people were to be persuaded to sweep aside all political differences, to overlook the mistake or shortcomings of the Government and of the cadres, and to make every sacrifice for the success of the resistance war in the South. To this end, Bác (Uncle) Hồ, appealed to the whole country in his by now familiar avuncular style.

Firstly, Ho concentrated his attack on the enemy, namely the French colonialists, whom he portrayed in villainous colours, underlining their wickedness and the "contradictions" which existed between them and the Allied Powers:

During the Second World War, the French colonialists twice sold out our country to the Japanese. By so doing, they betrayed the Allied Powers, and enabled the Japanese to inflict greater damage on the Allies. But they also betrayed our people, exposing us to destruction by bombs and bullets. Their own conduct placed the French colonialists outside the ranks of the Allies, and it also invalidated the treaties they had formerly compelled us to sign with them. 22

Thus, those French colonialists appeared on Ho's bill of indictment as cowardly, dishonest and cruel. Not only were they depicted as inherently perfidious and warlike, but they were said to have repeated their violent and perverse acts, in contravention of every principle of democracy, freedom and peace:

So, it is clear that in the past, the colonialists betrayed their own Allies and our country, and surrendered to the Japanese. At the present time, in the shadow of the British and Indian troops, and sheltering behind the Japanese soldiers, the colonialists are attacking the Southern part of our country. They have sabotaged the peace that China, America, Britain and Russia had won at the high price of many millions of lives. They have belied the promises of democracy and freedom proclaimed by the Allied Powers. 23

Having "proved" to his nation that guilt for the war lay wholly on the "colonialists", President Ho then advanced his own just cause, independence for Viet Nam, peace and justice for the world. In struggling for their cause, the Vietnamese were acting in complete harmony with their historical traditions of loyalty and courage, with the noble and laudable aspirations of many nations, including the French, and also with the honourable declarations and actual policy, of the Allied Powers:

Despite the treachery of the French "colonialists", our whole people were determined to side with the Allies and to oppose the invaders. When the Japanese surrendered, our entire people acting as one, transformed our country into a democratic republic and elected a provisional government, which is charged with the preparation of a national congress and the drafting of a national Constitution.

Not only are our actions in accord with the Atlantic and San Francisco Charters, and other similar documents, solemnly promulgated by the Allies, but they entirely conform with the glorious principles upheld by the French people:

Liberté, Egalité, and Fraternité....
for a just cause, for justice in the world, and in the land of Viet Nam and for its people that our compatriots throughout the land have risen to struggle, and they are absolutely determined to defend their independence. 24

Ho also took care to avoid offence to the French people as a whole by pinning the blame on those "ruthless invaders" and colonialists, who were behaving "lawlessly" in South Viet Nam. Furthermore, world opinion, as always, sided with the oppressed people who did "not want bloodshed, but loved peace". In claiming support from the "great count-

ries" and the countries which "love peace and democracy". Ho slyly disarmed the French people, whose national pride he readily acknowledged:

We do not hate the French people and France. We are energetically fighting slavery, and the ruthless policy of the French colonialists. We are not invading another's country. We defend only our own against the French invaders. Hence we are not alone. Those countries which love peace and democracy, and the weaker nations all over the world, all sympathize with us....Public opinion in the great countries - China, the United States, Russia and Britain - has supported our just cause.

Ho next appealed for unity, co-operation and determination in carrying out this patriotic resistance in the South for the deeply desired aim of "independence and freedom":

Compatriots throughout the country! Those in the South will do their utmost to resist the enemy. Those in the centre and in the North, will endeavour to help their Southern compatriots and will remain on guardWe are determined even at the sacrifice of millions of combatants and the waging of a protracted war of resistance, to defend the independence of Viet Nam and to free our children and grandchildren.

This struggle would demand great sacrifice, but victory was assured by the fatherly *Bác Hồ*, who offered as

his credentials nearly thirty years of struggle which had culminated in the glorious Proclamation of Independence:

With the unity of the whole people within the country and the support of so many friends abroad, we are sure of victory. 25

"Unity within the country" and "support of friends abroad", those two conditions of victory were the main goals towards the achievement of which the Communists were directing all their activities from December 1945 to December 1946.

The plan of that political campaign was first introduced in the directive: "Kháng Chiến Kiến Quốc" (Resistance war and national construction), issued on 25 November 1945 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party:

....The easier the seizure of power, the more difficult its preservation. The newly born Democratic Republican Government has to face up to an extremely complex situation. 26

Besieged by "enemies within and without", the Communist Party analyzed the situation, singled out French colonialists as the principal enemy, and defined its own duty as:

To mobilize the whole nation's forces to struggle with perseverance, to organize and to lead the protracted resistance war, and to combine guerilla warfare with the tactic of total non-co-operation. 27

But, if all the forces were to be deployed against the external enemy, then the unity of the whole people within

the country had first to be achieved. The Communist directive named some of the first tasks to be accomplished by the cadres and members of the party:

We must consolidate national power....eliminate the enemy within, improve the living conditions of the people....Our slogan should be: "The Nation above all" or "the Fatherland above all". 28

With those objectives in mind, Ho Chi Minh was at pains to plan and to implement campaigns against famine and illiteracy, at the same time as the campaign against foreign invaders. Hence, the triple slogan:

Diệt giặc đói (Eliminate famine!)
Diệt giặc dốt (Eliminate illiteracy!)
Diệt giặc ngoại xâm (Eliminate invaders!)

To win the support of the minorities in the Western highlands of the Southern part of Central Viet Nam, several Agitprop teams were sent to Ban-methuot, Pleiku, Kontum and other areas of the Highlands. The Marxist paper, Su That (Truth), delightedly reported their success:

Why are the Highlanders now fighting bravely at our side against the French? Because our revolution has been extended to the Western highlands. Our combatants have extended their work of agitation over the whole area. The Highlands well understand, nowadays, that their enemies are the French colonialists who have cruelly exploited the minority people....29

The report also hinted how the highlanders might be persuaded to join the anti-French campaign and to accept the

elimination of those of their leaders who had co-operated with the French:

The highlanders are awakened, nowadays, and are resolutely determined to eliminate the French. They often tell one another: "If the French come, they will chase us out. If we do not resist, our descendants will have to suffer and will place the blame on us. They will think that we were cowardly, not manly enough to dare to fight the French! And what a misfortune if they should refuse to offer any sacrifices in memory of our spirits!"

The elimination of those who had served the enemy also pleases the highlanders. Everybody seems to be well pleased by the assassination of Phan Lạc, a pro-French agent and an oppressor of the highlanders. 30

Thereafter, the Communist agents organized some guerilla units among the highlanders and helped an assembly of various tribal representatives to express "the closing of their ranks" behind the Ho Government. Agitprop was carried out simultaneously among Cambodians and Laotians, in order to win their co-operation in the protracted war against the French.

The motives behind those efforts of agitation and alliance were summarized by Quân Hồng (Red Troops):

Those enlightened highlanders are sincere, heroic, simple, self-sacrificing and enduring combatants. The Western plateau is an area of high altitude; its thick jungles,

mountains, brooks and obstructions, rendered it highly favourable to our guerilla fighters. Hence, the Western plateau is a solid rampart which will thwart a French invasion. The minorities living there will march forward, hand in hand, with other nationals of Indo-China, on the road towards freedom and progress. 31

While the successful campaign of "agitprop" among the Communist leaders, the Government of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi was encountering great difficulties from the opposition of the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach political parties, both of which enjoyed the support of the Nationalist Chinese occupation troops.

To appease the Chinese authorities, as well as the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach, Ho was making every effort to show himself humble, flexible and accommodating. To avoid provocation, the name Quân Giải Phóng (Liberation Army) was changed to Vệ Quốc Đoàn (National Guard Group), and several units of the National Guard were moved from the city centre to the outer suburbs where they would be less conspicuous. President Ho himself went out of his way to pay friendly visits on the Chinese military leaders, Lu Han, Hsiao Wen and even some low-ranking officers. By Ho's order, Hsiao Wen was presented with a beautiful home, but was later requested to help Ho's groups in subsequent conflicts between the Viet Minh and Chinese troops. At the same time, Ho effectively exploited every contradiction

between the various groups of Chinese troops, and criticised the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach, to General Lu Han, thus defusing the explosive situation with a view to maintaining the newly gained power of the Viet Minh Government in Hanoi.³² Moreover, so as to avoid conflict with the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach, the Communists declared the dissolution of their party,³³ closing their official newspaper Cờ Giải Phóng (Liberation Banner), signed the Giao Ước Đoàn Kết (Unity Agreement) with the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach leaders (24 November and 24 December 1945),³⁴ postponed the General Election from 19 December 1945 to 6 January 1946, established a provisional Coalition Government and offered seventy seats in the National Assembly to the two opposition parties.

While making those conciliatory gestures and political compromise however, the Communist Party shrewdly "mobilised their mass organizations to fight, denounce and isolate those reactionary enemies."³⁵

An editorial in Su That newspaper explained the party's policy for the period:

Our revolution is still a revolution for national liberation.... We must direct our forces against the principal enemy (French invaders) and, at the same time, isolate the secondary enemy (Vietnamese reactionaries and traitors). Defeat the aggressors, eliminate the traitors; these are the twin tasks for every Indo-Chinese citizen.

Our basic policy during this period is to reconcile the contradictions between the different social strata in the country, to allay the enmities that exist between the different races of Indochina, and to unite the various strata and groupings with a view to forming a national united front to oppose the French colonialist invaders. 36

To promote an effective fighting force against the "French colonialist invaders", the military means should be combined with the economic and the political ones. Thus, an editorial in the Su That newspaper, issued on the occasion of Bình Tuất Lunar New Year (1946), set out the three principal tasks for the period: Defeating the French colonialists, increasing production, and summoning the first session of the National Assembly.

On that occasion, to heighten the morale of the fighters who were far away from home, "eating and sleeping in the wind and rain, enduring cold on the battlefield", President Ho wrote a letter to convey the whole nation's gratitude to them:

Beloved fighters,
While our compatriots are burning incense to honour their ancestors, you burn gunpowder to defend the Fatherland. While our compatriots fire crackers to welcome Spring, you fire your guns to eliminate the enemy. You resolutely fight the enemy so that our compatriots may safely welcome Spring. Consequently, our compatriots will never forget your great service....37

Following old tradition, Ho included some popular verses to wish the combatants final success in "comradely" fashion:

When the Resistance War ends in
victory, together we shall drink
a lot of brandy!.....

In a special message addressed to his compatriots throughout the whole country, Ho thoughtfully sent special wishes to "the fighters at the front and their families in the rear". To mark the first Tet (Lunar New Year Festival) of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the revolutionary leader made a political appeal:

In the course of this New Year, our compatriots will struggle for a new life, will all contribute to the long Resistance War in order to complete our country's independence and freedom. With the coming of the New Year, our compatriots will all unite more closely, struggle more fiercely and produce more abundantly. 38

To correlate the duty of raising production with the fight against invasion, Ho went on to coin a slogan for peasants:

Thức túc binh cường or Ăn no đánh thắng.
(With sufficient food, the Army will
be strong and victorious).

But the policy of the period was well summarized in another concise and clear slogan:

Hòa hoãn bên trong, quyết thắng giặc ngoài.
(Domestic conciliation, crushing external enemies).

General Election and a Coalition Government for Resistance.

Of equal importance with the military and production duties, the Marxist newspaper affirmed, was the convocation of a National Assembly. So far, the Government of Ho Chi Minh was no more than a provisional one and even the Democratic Republic, established by the Viet Minh, had not yet been officially ratified by the people, nor recognized by other governments in the world.

Early in 1946, this was hinted at in a Su That editorial which emphasized the importance and the meaning of the General Election:

All citizens should cast their votes so as to give the lie to propaganda emanating from the French enemy, and to indicate to the world that the Vietnamese people, who seized political power from the Japanese fascists, are now building a Democratic Republic, and are resisting the cruel invasion of their country by French colonialists.... All citizens should cast their votes to demonstrate to the United Nations that the Vietnamese people desire to be completely independent and have the qualifications necessary for the maintenance of complete independence.... All citizens should cast their votes to increase the whole nation's confidence in the great plan of "resistance war and nation-building," and to demolish the sceptical and reactionary contentions of the Vietnamese defeatists and traitors. 39

Thus, the general election was seen as a means of political persuasion: it could give Vietnamese people a sample of "new democracy" with freedom and power returned to the citizens; it lifted a little window to give the outside world a glimpse of "a free and democratic republic"; it also served as a source of prestige and authority for the government of Ho Chi Minh.

The difficulty was that Viet Nam never had a general democratic election and there was no such thing as an electoral roll. Besides which, most people did not know how to read or write. Moreover, the great majority of peasants did not know any politicians nor understand anything about politics beyond their own villages. In that situation, the General Election became no more than a political ritual. But the Communist leaders knew how to draw political benefit for their organisations.

Since the Indochinese Communist Party had declared itself dissolved in November 1945, most Communist leaders presented themselves as candidates under the patronage of the Revolutionary Viet Minh Front. Predictably, the undeclared Communists and their fellow travellers who were aided by the detailed planning and effective propaganda of the Viet Minh, secured election. Here and there, a "Democrat", an "Independent", a "Patriotic Personality", even a "Buddhist" or "Catholic Candidate", was added, but Communist strategy depended upon having a Viet Minh majority

in the National Assembly.

The General Election was subsequently hailed as a complete success and a Su That editorial revealed how the election and the resistance movement were two related elements of the same overall Communist plan:

The protracted, but firm persevering resistance of the Indochinese nationals, together with the successful General Election of the Vietnamese people, have compelled the French colonialists to recognise the right of internal administration of Viet Nam. 40

Just one week before the opening of the National Assembly, Ho Chi Minh obtained the assent of General Hsiao Wen, of the Viet Quoc and the Viet Cach, to the formation of a Coalition Government of Resistance. 41 This conciliatory gesture on the part of the Chinese cleared the way for Ho to convene the National Assembly, which in turn, requested Ho Chi Minh to form a new Government.

Since his main purpose was to secure the ratification of the National Assembly, Ho showed himself willing to compromise with the opposition parties and to accommodate the various groupings. But the Party had a detailed plan to cope with any emergency, as is confirmed in the account of Vo Nguyen Giap:

The first National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam was convened on 2 March. This was one day earlier than had been scheduled.

It was an emergency situation. The organizing committee had prepared for the Assembly an alternative meeting place at Dinh Bang in Bac Ninh province. At the last moment, the Permanent Committee of the Party decided to convene the Assembly in Hanoi itself. Uncle Ho told the comrade members of the Organizing Committee to be precise and businesslike, so that the planned programme might be completed in a single session. 42

In the course of this session which lasted only one day, Ho proclaimed the opening of the National Assembly, gave a report of his Provisional Government's achievements, offered its resignation, was requested to form a new Coalition Government, and introduced his new Coalition Government together with an Advisory Council and a Resistance Committee, for ratification by the National Assembly!

Conciliation and Preliminary agreements with France.

On 20 February 1946, Reuter News Agency announced the conclusion of Sino-French agreements under whose terms the French were to replace the Chinese occupation forces in North Viet Nam. It was rumoured that South Viet Nam had been lost to the French, and that the return of the French to North Viet Nam was imminent. Such speculation, and the resulting discontent further confused an already panicstricken people in the Northern cities. To sustain national morale and

maintain the confidence of the people in his Government, Ho Chi Minh countered these damaging rumours with a psychological appeal:

At the present time, in addition to the military war, the French colonialists are engineering a psychological war against us by means of leaflets, posters, and false rumours, they are trying to sow confusion and anxiety among our people so as to demoralize them. Remember the ancient saying: "It is more important to win men's hearts than to occupy forts". Henceforth, a struggling nation, as ours is at this moment, must always be well-prepared and must remain calm, firm, and always ready to meet any new situation which may arise. Whenever the enemy comes to occupy an area, the residents should apply the tactics of "scorched earth", forcing the enemy to suffer and to become weak from lack of food, shelter and transportation. Always be ready and never become confused or reluctant to fight to the last inch of land and the last man in the country.... 43

After all, the Franco-Chinese agreements were signed on 28 February 1946.

The French claimed that they were simply replacing the Chinese troops in completing a mission entrusted to them by the Allies, whereas the Vietnamese viewed the French move as a "legal manoeuvre" whose purpose was to establish a new form of "French

Protectorate" over Indochina. So ingenious a "political and diplomatic solution" on the part of the French placed Ho Chi Minh's Government in a very difficult dilemma.

To oppose so powerful a military mission while the "Viet Nam Liberation Army" existed in little more than name would seem to be tantamount to suicide, political as well as military. To accept the French troops arrival, on the other hand, would appear to the Vietnamese people as a surrender of national independence, and therefore, an abandonment of all revolutionary achievements to date and an unforgivable crime.⁴⁴ Moreover, were the French to succeed in re-establishing their authority in Viet Nam, they would certainly, by one means or another, try to eliminate the Viet Minh. Thus, "to fight the French or not to fight", posed a painful dilemma that exercised Ho Chi Minh and the Communist leaders in Viet Nam.

If Vo Nguyen Giap's version may be believed, Ho and the Central Committee of the Communist Party responded to this dilemma on 3 March 1946, by issuing the "Situation and Policy" directive:

The answer can be briefly summarized as follows:

If the French maintain their policy of an "autonomous Indochina" as outlined by the declaration of 24 March 1945, we shall certainly fight and a protracted guerilla war may possibly develop; if the French recognize

the "self-government" (tự chủ) of Indochina, there may be a reconciliation. Such a reconciliation with the French would help eliminate the intrigues of the Chiang Kai-shek clique, the Vietnamese reactionaries, and the remnants of French fascists, who colluded to isolate us and force us to fight several enemies at the same time.... 45

Reconciliation and negotiation with the French, according to Giap's account, would provide a relaxation of tension during which the preparation for a new struggle might be carried out. The Party's Central Committee therefore, emphasized the overriding importance of being well prepared:

It is essential that, during our negotiation with the French, we should not only prepare ceaselessly for resistance anywhere and at any time, but should also intensify our preparedness. We must absolutely not allow negotiations with the French to diminish the fighting spirit of our people. 46

Su That (Truth) newspaper (No.22, 1 March 1946) carried an editorial entitled: "The Position of the Vietnamese Nation", to induce the public to accept the policy of negotiation. The article cited Sainteny as saying:

The French Government is willing to recognize that Viet Nam has the right to form its own Government,

National Assembly, Army and to manage its Finances, while remaining a member of the French Union.

The position of Hanoi was summarized in the slogan coined by Ho: "Độc Lập và Hợp Tác" (Independence and Cooperation).

The Su That editorial, then hinted at possible agreements:

Agreements on commercial, economic and military matters between a completely independent Viet Nam and the French Government, may be signed on the principle of equality and mutual cooperation....Moreover, Viet Nam may consider France as a "most favoured nation" (tôi huệ quốc).

The two nations, Vietnamese and French, may work together, hand in hand, not in a narrow "French Union" but rather in a broad front of peace and democracy, for the common welfare of the two nations and the whole world. 47

Even while preparing for negotiations, Ho Chi Minh and the Party made ready to fight a war of resistance should the need arise. Besides the Coalition Government of Resistance, a National Committee of Resistance was created, with Vo Nguyen Giap and Vu Hong Khanh as president and vice-president, respectively. On 5 March, at a time when Ho Chi Minh had already expressed his readiness to sign an agreement with the

French, the Resistance Committee issued the following appeal:

Compatriots! Rise up to oppose the enemy. The critical hour has struck for our Fatherland. The National Committee of Resistance, formed of the Representatives of various political parties, has the duty of unifying the Army and leading civilians and soldiers on the battle-ground, for the defence of our Fatherland. Compatriots! Wholeheartedly support the Committee, and be ready to follow its directives, in order to gain success for our army and people, and to grasp the independence of our Fatherland. 48

That was an official appeal, obviously intended to allay the resentment of those who objected to any conciliatory gesture towards the French. On the other hand, at the same date, the Central Committee of the Party, gathered at Huong Canh, a rural area near Hanoi, and after deliberation, agreed to the following conclusion:

At this juncture, the best tactic for the salvation of the country, is not to cut the bridges, but to preserve peace. It is to resist both erroneous tendencies:

- a) to fight at any cost;
- b) to suffer the illusion that, once the agreements are reached with the French, all difficulties will be at an end. Vigilance should be maintained concerning the threat of provocative activities on the part of the Chiang Kai-shek troops and of the Vietnamese reactionaries. 49

Thus far the obstacle to an agreement between France and Hanoi had been the difference between Viet Nam's doc lap (independence), as requested by Hanoi, and tự tri (autonomy), as offered by France. On the evening of 5 March 1946, in his discussion with Sainteny and L. Pignon, Ho Chi Minh expressed his readiness to reach a compromise agreement with the French and suggested that the Vietnamese expression doc lap be translated by the somewhat imprecise French word "libre" (free).

The French delegates, however, still refused the automatic integration of Cochinchina into the "free state of Viet Nam", even though Ho Chi Minh insisted on this. Consequently the negotiations had reached a state of deadlock when the French delegates left Ho Chi Minh that evening. Meanwhile, the French Navy continued to approach Hai Phong where, on the following day, it clashed with the Chinese troops who were still responsible for control of the port.

Early in the morning of 6 March 1946, a messenger awakened Sainteny to tell him that "President Ho was ready to accept the agreement". In the afternoon, at 4 p.m., the Preliminary Agreements between Hanoi and France were signed by Ho Chi Minh and Sainteny at 38 Ly Thai To Street, the residence of the French General Treasurer and later, of President Ho Chi Minh.⁵⁰ Since the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach had constituted the political opposition to Ho Chi Minh's Government, Ho contrived to have Vu Hong Khanh, the leader of the

Viet Cach Party, append his signature to the agreements as well. Some years afterwards Vo Nguyen Giap wrote a very brief, but nonetheless revealing, account of the incident:

As the President of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, President Ho signed first. He then passed the text of the agreements to Vu Hong Khanh who was standing nearby. Under pressure from his political patrons, Chiang Kai-shek's representatives, Vu Hong Khanh had to swallow his pride and affixed his signature as "the special delegate of the Government Council". 51

Nghiêm Kế Tô, another nationalist leader, later commented:

From their position of protest, the opposition parties suddenly found themselves having to share the responsibility for the agreements with the French. The Machiavellism of the Viet Minh, by a quick stroke, transformed their opponents into supporters. The simple people, always incapable of comprehending such complicated political machinations, needed only a few persuasive explanations from men such as Tran Huy Lieu, to voice their enthusiastic support once again.... 52

Persuasive explanations, indeed, were offered to the public meeting on 7 March 1946, by Vo Nguyen Giap:

France recognised the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam to be a "free

state". A "Free State" is not equivalent to, but rather higher than, an "autonomous government". A "Free State" is not exactly an "Independent State", but if freedom can be preserved, our nation will get its Independence; complete Independence. 53

After disarming the crowd by assuring it of his goal of Independence, the militant Marxist gave evidence of his skill in historical dialectic:

We have chosen the way of negotiation so as to create favourable conditions for our struggle to gain complete Independence.... Russia, in 1918 signed the Brest-Litovsk agreements in order to stop the German invasion, to reinforce her army and consolidate her political power during the cease-fire. Isn't it true that Russia has become very strong, thanks to that treaty? 54

Vu Hong Khanh was invited to contribute his explanation too! But the Ho Chi Minh magic was much more successful, even before he spoke! The rhetorical ground being already cleared by Giap; when Uncle Ho appeared, somebody started to cheer and then the whole crowd gave him a tremendous ovation. The benign leader voiced his fatherly approval for the arguments of Giap:

It is a mark of intelligence to choose negotiation rather than war. Why should you sacrifice 50,000 or 100,000 men when by

way of negotiation, you can
achieve Independence in say five
years?

After exhorting his compatriots to remain calm and disciplined, to be ready and brave, Ho Chi Minh exploited the full weight of his revolutionary prestige to stir the emotions and win the sympathy of the people:

I, Ho Chi Minh, have always led
you along the road to freedom.
Throughout the whole of my life,
I have fought for the Independence
of our Fatherland. Hence you
know that I would prefer death
rather than betrayal. I swear to
you that I have never betrayed you.

On 18 March 1946, General Leclerc led his troops into the capital of Viet Nam, to be enthusiastically welcomed by French residents in Hanoi. Understandably, there was resentment among Chinese residents, apprehension among Vietnamese, and renewed criticism from several political segments.

To allay those adverse feelings Ho Chi Minh found it expedient to sign with General Leclerc a joint communique, promising to French, Chinese and Vietnamese population a "definitive peace", "the end of your sufferings and the beginning of a period of loyal and fruitful collaboration between our peoples". The proclamation also asserted the "peaceful return of French troops in complete agreement with the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam" as a "symbol of union" between France and the Viet Nam associated with the

French Union.

In order to reassure the public that the Government did not surrender Viet Nam's sovereignty by "welcoming the French army in a friendly manner", Ho Chi Minh proposed to the French Commissioner, Jean Sainteny, to issue a carefully worded communiqué as follows:

Whereas the French Government recognises Viet Nam's right of forming her own Government and freely administering the country, the Provisional Government of Viet Nam does not object to the peaceful arrival of the French units which will replace the Chinese troops occupying the area of Indochina above the 16th parallel.

As first consequence of this preliminary convention, the cessation of hostilities throughout Indochina will be effective 24 hours after the broadcast of this proclamation on the Hanoi-Radio and the Saigon-Radio. 55

Ho Chi Minh
President of the Provisional Government
J.R. Sainteny of Viet Nam.
French Commissioner in North Indochina,
representative of the Provisional Government
of the French Republic.

But Ho realized that the news of his agreement with the French had jolted the entire nation, especially those who were fighting in the South. It came, indeed as a severe shock to the great majority, who had been constantly encouraged to "fight the French Colonialist to the last man". President Ho was at

pains to write a special letter to "compatriots, fighters at the front and the Administrative Committee in South Viet Nam", informing them of the Franco-Viet preliminary agreement and describing it as "a great success" for Viet Nam. This success, which Ho attributed to the "heroic struggle" in the South, resided in the following two points, according to Ho's explanation:

1. This is the first step in the negotiation to arrive at victory.
2. These negotiations will create political conditions of which we must know how to take advantage, in order to achieve Viet Nam's complete independence. 56

After appealing for support in favour of the Government, for "preparedness", "discipline" and for "consolidation of our forces" during the truce, Ho spoke of the future, employing a warm humanitarian tone:

We must save each drop of our compatriots' blood to build the future of our country. In our national struggle and construction, your enthusiastic spirit will have many more opportunities for development. 57

Preparations for Negotiation.

The Viet-French Convention of 6 March 1946 (see the complete text in Appendix C1) had stipulated that both sides will take measures "to create the favourable atmosphere necessary to the immediate opening of friendly and frank negotiations". The place was not definite yet: "either Hanoi, Saigon or Paris can be

chosen". This was nonetheless a very important issue in the minds of Hanoi leaders.

On 13 March 1946, exactly one week after the signing of the Preliminary Franco-Vietnamese Agreements, Ho wrote an open letter "to his compatriots throughout Viet Nam" and "to various Governments and nations all over the world". The letter vehemently denounced the French side for its failures correctly to implement the Agreements of 6 March 1946. But Ho's real intention became apparent only in the last paragraph, where he opened a campaign to win over public opinion in all parts of the world:

I earnestly call on the peoples and Governments all over the world, especially the French people, to support our just cause and to ensure that the French side correctly implements the Preliminary Agreements in order to maintain the friendly relationship between the two nations, and to safeguard world peace. 58

The appeals and denunciations were also published in Hanoi newspapers, especially in the Su That, the organ of the "Indochinese Marxist Society". While Su That No.25 (10 March 1946) expounded "the correct and successful policy of Preliminary Agreement", later issues, No.26 (14 March 1946) and No.28 (21 March 1946), listed provocations and violations of the Agreements on the part of the French, making specific mention of "their lack of concern about the official negotiation to be held in Paris".

Until that date, Ho Chi Minh and his government had been virtually unknown to the outside world and had not obtained any official recognition. The Communist leaders were naturally anxious to arrange for Ho and his Government to make a formal appearance in Paris, "the capital of light". That drive for international publicity was made clear in Ho's open letter of 13 March 1946, when he complained that "a week has passed and the French side has still not fixed a definite date for the official negotiation in Paris". That complaint, together with the direction of the political campaign outlined by the Communist leaders, was unfolded in an editorial of Su That No.29 (30 March 1946):

On the road leading to complete independence, the "Preliminary Agreements" are a milestone. This milestone must serve as a starting point for another journey: we must demand immediate official negotiations in Paris....

....Our immediate slogans at the present are: "Correct implementation of the Preliminary Agreements" and "Official negotiation in Paris". The basic slogan for our actual revolutionary period must be: "Establish a national front to oppose the French reactionaries and to regain complete independence".

Thereafter, the Communist Party instructed its members to emphasize those slogans and to organise "spontaneous demonstrations" in various areas to demand immediate opening of official negotiations in Paris.

After a Paris Radio Broadcast announced the appointment of Admiral Thierry D'Argenlieu as head of the French delegation to negotiate with Viet Nam, the Su That newspaper No.30 (6 April 1946) ran a revealing headline: "Official Negotiation: Nowhere but Paris". Being afraid that the French Government would conduct negotiations only in Viet Nam, thus depriving the Hanoi Government of its "international exposure", the Su That editorial insisted on the three points which Hanoi was arranging with the representatives of France toward the end of March 1946:

- 1). The Viet Nam National Assembly will send a delegation to visit France;
- 2). At the same time, a French delegation will come to Viet Nam to make preparations for an official treaty;
- 3). Subsequently, a Vietnamese delegation will come to France for official negotiations and for the signing of the official treaty in Paris. 59

In fact, several days after the meeting between High Commissioner D'Argenlieu and President Ho Chi Minh, on 24 March 1946, in Ha Long Bay, both sides agreed on the above three points and decided to have preparatory talks at Dalat before opening the official negotiations in Paris.

The Dalat Conference.

Some two weeks after the signing of the 6 March Preliminary Agreements, the Foreign Ministry of Hanoi

formed an ad hoc committee thoroughly to study the text of the Agreements, to define the important terms such as Free State, Indochinese Federation, French Union, and to propose a maximum list of demands, leaving the minimum one to the Government and the delegation to the Paris Conference.

Three days before the departure of the delegation to Dalat, Truong Chinh, then secretary general of the "Indochina Association for Marxist Studies", offered in a Su That editorial (No.31, 13 April 1946) a guideline for issues and demands at the Dalat Conference.

On 15 April the eve of the departure, at 4 p.m., the delegates were convened to a meeting with the Government. President Ho Chi Minh carefully summarized the positions to be maintained:

1. The status of a Free State: the extent of its freedom must be clarified; its sovereign territory and integral unification must be acknowledged.
2. The Indochinese Federation is of an economic nature only. There must be no Federation Government.
3. Concerning the French Union: Viet Nam accepts to be freely associated with it, provided the rights and duties of Viet Nam will be clearly defined. Viet Nam must have the rights of discussion and decision in the process of deliberation on the affairs of the Union.
4. Viet Nam must have independent diplomatic relations with England, America, China, Russia and her

neighbouring countries,
Thailand, India, Philippines.
Moreover, France must introduce Viet Nam to the United Nations.

5. Viet Nam must have her national bank and currency.
6. The State of Viet Nam must have independent economic rights.
7. There must be no military power on Federation level. The number, duties, place and time of station for French troops must be defined.
8. Generally speaking, we should base on the Preliminary Agreements to build up a sincere cooperation with France.

Careful readers can see that the seven previous points formed the substantial content of the negotiation package whereas the last point served as wrapping paper and label.

According to the veteran revolutionary leader, this "preparatory conference" will have great effects on the subsequent negotiations, caution was the keyword of his eight principal recommendations to the delegation:

1. Maximum unity in ideas as well as in actions;
2. Maximum caution;
3. Strict secrecy;
4. Not a single declaration without previous discussion.
5. Self-study after each meeting to account for strong or weak points of your arguments;
6. Various roles at the meeting: leading team, supporting team,

- and reserve team; someone to strike and someone to soothe;
7. Proposing only vital issues for discussion, leaving specific topics to be proposed by the French delegation;
 8. Leaving aside any question which will not be agreed upon, without mentioning "consultation with the Gouvernement". Such a mention would engage the Government in this pourparler. (This conference is simply a preparatory one which we attend only to appease the French High Commissioner D'Argenlieu, whereas the Government will officially participate only in the Paris conference). 60

This last point really reflected the sagacity and the shrewdness of Già Hồ (i.e. the old politician Ho or, literally, the old fox). It also made certain that the Dalat conference would lead to nowhere.

Another highly significant point was revealed when Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Home Minister, raised a question concerning the Nam Bo issue: "We should not bring out", replied Ho Chi Minh, "the question of cease-fire". The reason for this decision according to Professor Hoàng Xuân Hãn, a member of the Hanoi delegation to Dalat, was very likely the idea that the continuation of war in Nam Bo would be favourable to Hanoi at the negotiation table. This interpretation was later confirmed by a captured document bearing the words of General Nguyễn Bình, the commander of Viet Minh forces in Nam Bo: "To support the Dalat Conference, an order has been given for a general offensive".

However, during the Dalat Conference, realizing that the resistance forces had been hurt by French military activities, Vo Nguyen Giap, after consultation with Hanoi by private radio-phone, proposed the discussion of a cease-fire. But the French delegate, Torel, retorted that the cease-fire was an issue for the two Governments to decide....

It was obvious that at Dalat, the two delegations from Hanoi and Paris were using the same terms Nước tự-do (Etat libre), Liên-bang Đông-duông (Fédération indochinoise), Liên-hiệp Pháp (Union française), Nam-bô (Cochinchine), and so forth, with entirely different meanings. Since the positions of the two sides, beginning from the understanding of the nature and purpose of the "preparatory conference at Dalat", were far and wide apart, even irreconcilable, there was small wonder that the Dalat conference failed miserably, and both sides were very much disappointed.

In May, giving a report of the Dalat meeting, Su That paper related that "the exchanges of ideas at Dalat normally ended with the cliché expression: "Let's take note of that disagreement!"⁶¹ Another editorial of the same Party paper confirmed that the principal goal of the Communists was to drive toward the official negotiations in Paris:

We may say that, despite very little agreement between our side and the French at Dalat, this preparatory meeting has achieved its objective,

namely to help both sides to understand one another's position, thus further mutual understanding and favouring the negotiations in Paris. 62

"Good will", Propaganda, and Fontainebleau.

When the Government delegation headed by Nguyen Tuong Tam and Vo Nguyen Giap was making the final preparations for the meeting at Da Lat, the National Assembly's delegation headed by Pham Van Dong, was ready for a "good will visit" to France.

On 16 April 1946, bidding farewell to the delegation, Ho Chi Minh advised the whole group of their duties:

You delegates have three things to do: be united, be careful, and make the French understand us for the purpose of strengthening the friendship between the two nations. 63

Always a faithful spokesman for the Party, Su That newspaper No.32 (20 April 1946), later expalined "the duties of the Vietnamese delegation to France" in the terms of the above directive of President Ho, and added its own authoritative suggestions about the work of political persuasion:

It has to be admitted that our work of international propaganda still leaves much to be desired. Our purpose is just. Our nation is politically mature [sic]. Yet, French colonialists are still active in their counter-propaganda against

us, asserting that we are usurpers, that our nationalist movement has pro-Japanese tendencies and that our nation is still immature.... To make the French people understand us in order to increase mutual friendship and mutual help between the two nations, Viet and French, is an important duty of our National Assembly's Delegation to France.... ...We are looking forward to the happy return of our delegation with the understanding and friendship of the new France, and also with the good news about some twenty-thousand of our compatriots in France .

Indeed, the main purpose of Dong's delegation was to proclaim "the good cause" of the Hanoi Government and to obtain support from the French people through the French Left. To create a more pleasant atmosphere for diplomatic activities, the Marxist paper, Su That (No.31, 13 April 1946), in an editorial, proposed a further differentiation of enemies. This periodic process required, as usual, a new slogan and a few explanations, under the heading, "The physiognomy of a French reactionary":

Who are French reactionaries? - They are the most selfish, cruel and stubborn imperialists. In France, they form the stumbling block against the forward advance of the new democracy movement and oppose friendly diplomacy towards the Soviet Union. Concerning Indochina, they protest against the Franco-Vietnamese Preliminary Agreements and would

maintain a policy of repression against our movement for national liberation, hoping again to impose the French Imperialist yoke on our people.

The "classical imperialist policy of divide-and-rule" was examined and condemned. To counter that policy with a similar tactic, namely the exploitation of the various conflicts arising from the Second World War and the contradictions between the Vichy Group and the "Free France Front", Firstly the Su That editor endeavoured to attach uncomplimentary labels to those reactionaries:

Among the ranks of French reactionaries, are concealed French traitors, French fascists.... former agents of Hitler and of the Japanese fascist militarists, loyal disciples of the traitors, Petain and Decoux.

The "reactionaries" being identified and "prosecuted", the Marxist editorial then proposed a new slogan and a temporary alliance:

We do not approve French colonialism, because our revolutionary goal for this period is to advance toward complete independence. But for a limited period, we set aside the general slogan, "Down with the French colonialists", for among the French colonialists, there are also relatively progressive members who accept the Preliminary Agreements, sincerely recognising the self-government of Viet Nam.

Since the concrete and immediate enemy of our nation at the present is the French reactionary, we use only the slogan "Down with the French reactionaries". . . .

Indeed, French reactionaries are enemies not only of our people but also of the French people.

In our struggle against French reactionaries, therefore, our people should make an alliance with the French people, with the truly democratic and progressive Frenchmen. 64

That delicate "distinction of friend from enemy" was designed specifically to incriminate a "reactionary group of selfish, cruel and stubborn colonialists" in Indochina, and at the same time, to win the sympathetic support of "the French people", and particularly, "the progressive elements of the New France". This was expounded again by the Marxist Su That No.36 (18 May 1946) in a leading article of which the captivating title well reflected its content: "Tội ác và thủ phạm" (Crime and the Culprit). A long catalogue of crimes were predictable: arrest, torture, killing, rape, plunder, ransacking, house-burning, bribery, deceit, false calumny, sowing division, and what not? The two characteristics of the "white terror" were made obvious: "repression and deceit". The sensitive nerves of French protesters were jarred by the mention of "heavy bombs dropped by French soldiers on suspected villages", and the sensational description of some crimes so hideous as to surpass belief:

French "elite soldiers" thrust children into bags and threw them into the rivers! They set fire to petrol in a

large basin and forced into it the head of any Vietnamese citizen who protested the partition of his country! 65

While allegations of such infernal atrocities were obviously calculated to identify colonialism with satanism, the author took pains to acquit the "French people":

No, we do not believe that the heaven-shaking crimes committed in South Viet Nam and in Laos could be ascribed to the French people, who, indeed, have carried out several revolutions, professed the doctrine of "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite", fought hard during four long years against the Hitler regime, and have survived terrible sufferings. Such a people, we are sure, would not like to inflict repressive tortures on us as Hitler has inflicted on them. Would it be possible for the French people who enjoyed the high distinction of having championed the just cause, to forget the advice of their wise man: "Dont do to other people what you would not like others to do to you"?

We do not hold the new France responsible for what the Indochinese people are presently suffering. Born of, and growing from, a struggle for liberation, the new France has declared itself to the world, through Constitutional Assembly:

"Faithful to her traditions and international laws, France will not start any aggressive war, and will never violate by force the freedom of another nation" (The New Constitution).

While proclaiming such a humanitarian

principle, how could France, in deeds, strangle to death the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam?

No, being a heroic nation, a champion of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, the French people would not accept the indictment for those base crimes. They would welcome the identification of the specific criminals on whom they might pour blame and hate. The author, therefore, singled out the culprits:

We well understand. Those that outraged the French people and merited their strong disapproval.... were perpetrated by a group of French reactionaries i.e., a handful of French imperialists and colonialists who were most brutal, rapacious, and stubborn. Those are the French capitalists and their agents, including French traitors who were pro-German and pro-Japanese.... They do not have the right to claim to be representative of the French people, or of the new France simply because they are rather enemies of the French people and of the New France. Their Machiavellian scheme is to complete the liquidation of Nam Bo liberation movement before the official negotiations in Paris.... Their repressive and terrorist tactics in Viet Nam and Laos are not only intended to preserve the selfish interests of French colonialists, but also to turn Indochina into a base, where they would co-operate with other international reactionaries against the movement of new democracy in France and the anti-colonial revolution in South East Asia.

Finally, after hinting at the hardship of an adventurous war against experienced Vietnamese guerillas, and the gloomy picture of a bloody defeat at their hands, the article ends with a suggestion which well reflects the real

purpose of the "good will visit" and of the whole negotiation period:

Some time in the future, the French people would feel forced publicly to disavow their barbarian activities, and together with the Indochinese nationals adequately to punish those crimes. 66

The "good will" delegation left Paris for Viet Nam on 16 May 1946, but Pham Van Dong remained in France to be the leader of the Hanoi delegation to the negotiation conference at Fontainebleau.

In the meantime, the French Government was trying to set up the Nam kỳ tự trị (Autonomous Cochinchina) and "to liberate" the Minorities Area, while the Viet Minh sustained the "anti-colonialist struggle" by means of guerilla and sabotage. Thus the hostilities continued in Nam Bo (Cochinchina), in Nam Trung Bo (Southern Part of Central Viet Nam), then spread out to North and Northwest. Both sides exchanged denunciations and accusations, while the negotiations at Fontainebleau made no progress.

On 27 June 1946, a general strike was organised to protest against the French, and Su That, No.42, 30 June 1946, published an editorial to explain "the day of united struggle":

The will of the Vietnamese nation is made clear....
The Vietnamese people and their patriotic political parties, always united and increasingly

united [sic], have trampled under foot all schemes of division on the part of the French reactionary colonialists.

The Vietnamese people will always support and cooperate with the Government in domestic as well as in foreign affairs.

The Vietnamese people are ever loyal to their just cause and ever ready to struggle for just cause.

...The Vietnamese people deeply admire the sublime ideals of the French people, sincerely cooperate with the new France, and therefore, must be united with the French people....

That high "admiration", "cooperation" and "union" with the French people did not prevent the Viet Minh from making ready for resistance. This was an early sign of a future military opposition already in the course of preparation:

On 27 June 1946, the Vietnamese people opposed the hostile advance of the French reactionary colonialists by negative means. The people are more than willing to use positive means of opposition as the combatants have been doing on the Southern front if necessary.

To make people "united and more united" in order to give undivided support to the Government in Hanoi and to the delegation in Paris, the Viet Minh created the National United Front (Hội Liên Hiệp Quốc Dân Việt Nam/or Liên Việt), just two days before the departure of Ho Chi Minh and the Government delegation for France.

During the negotiation in Paris, division and opposition arose increasingly in Hanoi. By July 1946, the Viet Minh felt it necessary to use force: the headquarters of the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang was searched, "traitors" were arrested, "reactionary documents" and "evidence of crimes" were confiscated. The Su That paper (No.45, 19 July 1946) published a bill of indictment and invoked the authority of the President of the Lien Viet Front, a "non-partisan personality", Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, who represented President Ho during his absence, to appeal for "more unity" and "more support":

The situation is critical, everybody realizes that. For, in our country, French reactionaries are using military forces to destroy our forces in the South and to occupy strategic positions in the North. In France, the position of the French Government is exactly the same as in Dalat. It is necessary for us to be united and to unify our actions in order to maintain power and effectively to support our delegation at the negotiating table....
...Our nation welcomes and agrees with the declaration of cu Huynh: "We must unite to build the country and to support the diplomatic mission".

From the French side, Fontainebleau had been intended to solemnize the official signing of the agreements which would have been spelled in details at Dalat. But, in fact, Fontainebleau was simply a repetition of Dalat. Just as Vo Nguyen Giap had slammed

the door abruptly to end the Dalat conference on 11 May, Pham Van Dong angrily left Fontainebleau in the same manner on 12 September 1946, to embark on his return trip the following day.

After receiving news of the failure of the Fontainebleau Conference, Hanoi's Government with the old "non-partisan" Home Minister, Huynh Thuc Khang, as the official representative of Cu Ho, urgently appealed for "a closing of the ranks" while making preparations for a "welcome home" ceremony. On the other hand, Truong-Chinh, the spokesman of the "Indochinese Marxist Association" and the real lieutenant of Ho Chi Minh for the period, issued an instruction on "The failure of Fontainebleau". This instruction, dated 12 September 1946, was made public in Su That paper No.54, 20 September 1946.

To the first question "why failure?", Truong-Chinh after citing a series of "facts", stated an unambiguous answer which was printed in bold type:

The ultimate and fundamental cause
of the failure of Fontainebleau
Conference was on the French side
and not on ours. 67

The second question was concerning the future of the Viet-French relations. Here, the Marxist dialectician offered a subtle distinction between the Viet-French diplomatic relations in general and the particular case of the Fontainebleau negotiation. He also raised the hope of new negotiations to appeal for greater unity and "Perseverant struggle:

...The termination of the Fontainebleau Conference does not mean complete failure of the Viet-French diplomatic relation or the Viet-French negotiation as a whole. It is very possible that our country and France would open new negotiations (as the French delegation has suggested for next January) and will sign an official Viet-French treaty. This hope will materialize if, from one hand, our people are united and persevere in our struggle, and, on the other hand, the French people and the democratic forces could succeed in enforcing a more reasonable attitude among colonialists. It also depends upon the growth of the world movement of peace and democracy, and upon the international détente in favour of the Viet-French relation. Otherwise... it would give rise to a military conflict.

Facing the factual failure in diplomacy and the mounting criticism of the other Vietnamese politicians, the Marxist leader Truong-Chinh, then, outlined the agenda for the members of the "Marxist association":

What should be done?
 Firstly, we must clearly explain the cause of the Fontainebleau failure in order to publicly denounce the wicked scheme of the French reactionary colonialist, and to promote the people's opposition against them. Secondly we must oppose the attitude of doubt and consolidate the people's confidence in President Ho and the Government delegation. We must

also oppose those who are wavering, pessimist, opportunist or provocative, thinking that the diplomatic policy of President Ho and the Government is not right, that the preliminary accords of 6 March 1946 are wrong, etc....

...We must appeal to the people to form a wide alliance and a solid union in the Vietnamese National United Front, to close the ranks around the Government and President Ho, and finally to be well prepared for any unforeseen contingency.

This "unforeseen contingency" was also hinted at in the same instruction:

If the French colonialists do not change their attitude, willingly accept a cease fire and observe the preliminary accords of 6 March 1946, the partial war between Viet-Nam and France will continue in a seesaw. But if our people are not very well united and if the situation in France and in the world suffers unfavourable complications, then the partial war could be transformed into a nationwide war.

The instruction, however, ended on an optimistic note, appealing for more confidence and revealing the far-reaching political objectives at which the shrewd internationalists had aimed from the very beginning of the negotiations:

Though the visit of President Ho and the Government delegation to France this time, was not conducive to the signing of an official and

total treaty with France,,it has scored, indeed, a great success: it made French people cognizant with us and to strongly support us; it also attracted world opinion in favour of Viet Nam and deepened the sympathy of the whole world for Viet Nam's hard struggle and profound aspirations. From economic and legal viewpoints, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam does not have any position on the international stage yet, but in spirit it has become an obvious reality. 68

Ho's visit to Paris and the Modus Vivendi.

When the "good will" delegation first arrived (26 April 1946) and was courteously received in Paris, Pham Van Dong cabled a favourable report to President Ho, and President Ho, who was seeking international recognition, did not neglect to send a telegram to D'Argenlieu, (14 May 1946) requesting the High Commissioner to convey his gratitude to the French Government and the French people. This was an appropriate preparation for his official visit to Paris, which Hanoi's diplomatic activities had won him from the French Government. Determined to acquire the support of the French people, the Communist leaders from Hanoi chose to set aside any kind of hostility towards the French and adopted an attitude of kindness and friendship. Before leaving for France, President Ho sent a special letter to his Southern compatriots to express his concern about the future of Nam Bo (Cochinchina) and to disavow any betrayal ascribed to him. Ho, in another letter to all his compatriots (both letters were dated

31 May 1946), also took pains to forestall any objection and to get the entire nation to close the ranks behind him. Firstly, the hardships he had borne for his revolutionary ideal, constituted a moving public appeal:

My life has only one purpose which is to struggle for the Fatherland's interests and our people's happiness. When I hid in the mountains, was imprisoned, and braved dangers, it was all for this purpose.

Now, through their solidarity, the people have grasped the national power from the invaders and entrusted me with the National Government, I am deeply concerned, day and night, for this purpose, but I try to be patient.

Today, following the Government's order and the people's will, I say goodbye to you for the long trip to France with our delegation; this is also for the same purpose.

Whenever I can, and wherever I am, I unswervingly pursue only one purpose, namely, to be of use to our nation and our people. Hence, at this time, I pledge to you that all members of our Delegation and I, will endeavour to be worthy of the people's trust. 69

Since "state government was a common duty to all! like a family-father, Ho invited every citizen to "share that responsibility" in helping the Government's negotiations to achieve success:

How can you help?

- 1). By uniting closely and avoiding any divisive action.
- 2). By trying to practise industry and economy, in order to avoid famine.

- 3). By keeping order and strictly complying with the Government's directives.
- 4). By practising moderation and kindness toward foreign residents.

Your correct implementation of those points will contribute to our diplomatic work. If you have affection for me, I trust that you will fulfill my wishes.

Since diplomacy, like charity, should begin at home, Ho availed himself of the opportunity to win the hearts of foreign residents in Viet Nam, and French residents in particular:

Living among the Vietnamese people, you and the Vietnamese meet one another every day, and you experience plenty, or want, together. Hence, the Vietnamese are your friends and Viet Nam is your second Fatherland. The Vietnamese people and you should respect and love one another; sincerely practice mutual cooperation and mutual friendship, put into practice the saying, "People the world over are brothers" (Tu Hai giai huynh de). If Viet Nam is prosperous, yourselves will share plenty of happiness. 70

To answer any objection about the violent language and the hostile attitude of the Viet Minh during the previous months, the Hanoi diplomats would call attention to the delicate distinction between reactionary fascist Frenchmen and the truly democratic ones, as stated in the "Open Letter to the true democratic Frenchmen ":

Those Frenchmen supporting the reconquest of Indochina are reactionary fascists....The common interests for both French people and the Vietnamese people resides in the elimination of all reactionaries and the building of a common peace. The colonialists cannot forever divide the democratic forces. Nothing can break the united bloc of progressive elements.

Our true French democratic friends, you are actually showing that spirit of unity. Please make the people of Indochina and of the progressive world understand the New France; please positively oppose the reactionaries....., and do your best to intervene in favour of Vier Nam's struggle for freedom. 71

Truong Chinh also acquitted the French people of the colonialist tendency of those selfish individuals who happened to represent the French Government in Indochina at that time:

The attitude of those representatives of the French Government has aroused suspicion among the Indochinese people. But we believe that such an attitude is not consistent with the desire for freedom and justice of the French people. It is rather an expression of the unbecoming and selfish interests of French colonialism. The Vietnamese people have great confidence in the consensus of the French people which is to support them.... But the Vietnamese people have no right naively to trust in the sincerity of the reactionary French colonialists. 72

Indeed, in 1946, Hanoi was conducting a consistent diplomatic campaign to acquire de facto recognition from the French Government, and at the same time, to gain the support of the French people. Ho Chi Minh was seemingly proud to acknowledge his diplomatic achievement, when he delivered a very kindly but nonetheless shrewd speech at the luncheon given by the French Government:

The reception given me by the French people and Government has moved me to the innermost depths of my heart. Please convey to the French Government and people the sincere thanks of the Vietnamese people for the sympathy and friendliness the French people and Government have expressed to me. 73

While insisting on Vietnamese self-government, Ho made a clever allusion to the case of the Basque provinces, "a very beautiful region of France", and praising the noble political principles upheld by the French people since the Great Revolution of 1789, Ho declared his willingness to adhere to the French Union as suggested before by French negotiators:

The French Union that we will establish on a democratic basis can be set up only under a good omen. It is here in Paris, a heroic and generous city, which proclaimed the principles of liberte, egalite, and fraternite, a city which, traditionally, champions the equality of other peoples, it is in this very city that I solemnly declare that Viet Nam will join this humanitarian organisation.

That declaration might sound to be a political compromise or a naive statement, innocent enough to assure the French people of a new friend in the French Federation. ⁷⁴ Actually it is evidence of Ho's consummate skill in applying "correct terms" in diplomacy and politics. Two months before, the Franco-Vietnamese Preparatory Meeting at Dalat had "taken note of a disagreement" on that question: the French negotiators maintained the intrinsic legal nature of the French Union to deny the right of diplomatic representation to Viet Nam and its members, whereas the Vietnamese Government vehemently opposed it, demanding all the rights of a free state. ⁷⁵ In the diplomatic atmosphere of a state luncheon in Paris, President Ho proved himself a very shrewd negotiator in reiterating his firm position by a pleasant "verbal detour", when he "solemnly declared" his willingness to join the French Union as a "humanitarian organisation".

To convince his august audience at Champs Elysée and the good people of France, Ho Chi Minh continued to offer his listeners the happy remembrance of their noble political ideals and to draw a parallel between new France and new Viet Nam. He finally ended his diplomatic argument with the citation of a universal ethic principle that would bring together East and West, as well as Christians and Confucians:

Paris is the city which discovered
the external ideas for the 1789
Revolution; it has remained loyal

to its ideals in the bloodshed between the democratic and fascist blocs.

Paris has made no small contribution to the concord of Viet Nam and France within the French Union including free and equal nations which cherish the same democratic ideals and are all for freedom. It is here in Paris that Viet Nam will step forward to the path of independence. I am convinced that it will not be long before independent Viet Nam plays its worthy role in the Pacific. No doubt many difficulties are awaiting the Fontainebleau Conference which has the responsibility of laying the foundations for relations between a new France and a new Viet Nam. But sincerity and mutual confidence will level all obstacles. Have we not done away with aggressive imperialism and narrow chauvinism which are no longer fit for the present world? We are all stimulated by the same Spirit. The Confucian philosophy and the Western philosophy alike uphold an ethical principle which is: "Don't do to other people what you would not like others to do to you". 76

During the period of negotiation, Ho was understandably concerned to maintain a "friendly atmosphere" to favour his diplomatic enterprise. Learning that several political groups had shown their opposition and accused the Viet Minh of betrayal, Ho ordered Hanoi to postpone the 19 August commemoration of the

general insurrection. For the National Day of Independence (2 September), Ho sent a telegram to advise his government:

I wish all celebrations to be free of any hostility towards France, thus allowing her representatives eventually to attend. 77

All that endurance, kindness, speech, writing, diplomatic manoeuvre, all were aimed at achieving the recognition of Viet Nam's independence on the part of France. As Ho Chi Minh told the reporter of the Franc Tireur (15 August 1946), Hanoi was ready "to collaborate" with France, "to guarantee her moral, cultural and material interests" in Viet Nam in exchange for a guarantee, an affirmative word for the future of Viet Nam.

In fact, his long trip (30 May - 20 October 1946) undertaken as a "mission of good will" and of "psychological action" was carefully calculated for "maximum exposure" to world opinion through the press, and for a de facto recognition of a chief of state and an official guest in Ho. It was this political pursuit that made Ho lay a wreath at the unknown soldier's tomb on 13 July and insist on having his seat next to the French President at the reviewing of troops on 14 July 1946. ⁷⁸ So it is understandable that Ho felt his personal prestige being challenged and his political leadership seriously threatened, if the negotiations in Paris and his personal visit to France did not result in any official agreement to bring home as

a token of "concrete success", whatever it be in reality. The significance of symbol and "face" became more apparent than ever in Ho's conciliatory declaration:

I came to make peace. I am not content to return to Hanoi with empty hands. I would like to go home with France, in other words, to bring back to the Vietnamese people some concrete results meaning the certitude of cooperation between France and Viet Nam as we all wish. 79

That line of thought clearly explains the perplexity, the anguish and the last compromise of Ho Chi Minh, after the sudden termination of Fontainebleau and the departure of the Hanoi delegation (13 September 1946).

The following day, Ho still discussed with Marius Moutet and paid a visit to President Georges Bidault but the press did not have any important news to report. It was not until midnight that Ho walked into M. Moutet's bedroom to sign what has been called the temporary modus vivendi of 14 September 1946, very much compromising to the French demands. (See the text in Appendix C2) Apparently thining of the prediction of failure and of the accusations of appeasement, opportunism and betrayal tossed against himself on the part of the opposition parties in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh reportedly confided to a companion: "I just signed my own death sentence!"

The Modus Vivendi and its aftermath.

In Hanoi, Su That newspaper (No.54, 20 September 1946) presented a long editorial to rationalize Ho's signing of the Modus vivendi which was rejected by Pham Van Dong four days earlier. Pointing to the temporary character of the agreements which covered only some small but urgent questions, the Marxist editor assured the people of a more favourable solution in the future, concerning fundamental problems of permanent character such as the independence and the unification of Viet Nam. Then, the rationale of the Modus vivendi was summarized in a concise passage with a highly persuasive tone:

President Ho as well as President Bidault and Minister Moutet were able to distinguish the achievable from the unachievable at certain times and in certain conditions. The signing of the "modus vivendi" was motivated by President Ho's determination to make the Viet-French relations progress better than on 6 March 1946, and to deepen the friendship between the two democratic nations in view of achieving a higher unity. Our President knew that the agreement on modus vivendi could placate the Viet-French hostilities, buy more time to consolidate our strength in preparation for a more favourable situation. It also served to manifest the desire of our people to be on amicable terms with the French people, thus increasing the friendly support of the French people and of other free nations in favour of our country.

Though it is not completely satisfactory, it is, nevertheless, a good opportunity to plant another milestone on the Viet-French diplomatic road, and to demolish some stumbling blocks laid by certain French reactionaries. So why should we miss it?

The editorial praised the signatories as skillful diplomats and interpreted the agreement as signifying the agony of colonialism. The Marxist writer also found it opportune to deduce a dialectical conclusion against both "leftist" and "rightist" tendencies:

Anyhow, we should not be over-optimistic about the "modus vivendi" of 14 September 1946. Nor should we consider it totally unfavourable to us. Both those attitudes are not correct: the former will cause imprudence, unawareness and lack of preparedness in confronting unexpected contingencies, whereas the latter will give rise to a pessimistic and negative attitude, vulnerable to the provocation on the part of French reactionaries, or leading to defeatism and surrender.

The editor, however, took great care to warn people of the risk that French authorities might grasp the "real meat of the Viet-French question i.e., French economic and financial rights" in Indochina, and let go the wrapping skin i.e., the independence and the unification of Viet Nam in the French Union". Consequently, the editorial ended with an appeal for "union and struggle", in order to oblige the French

to implement the "Modus vivendi", and called for "preparedness", since "this temporary agreement might very well embolden French colonialists to attempt more oppressive measures".

The Viet-Minh information services made every effort to convince Vietnamese people that the "modus vivendi" signed in Paris as a proof of the "policy of moderation" of Hanoi Government, would, eventually, lead to the complete independence and unification of the country under the same Vietnamese Democratic Government. For this purpose, Hanoi vehemently condemned the Provisional Government of Dr. Thinh in Saigon, and staunchly reasserted the authority of the Nam-Bo Provisional Executive Committee created and headed by the Viet Minh since September 1945. To harmonize that political concert, on 22 September 1946, the shadow Nam-Bo Provisional Executive Committee issued a declaration claiming itself to be "the only legal authority in Nam-Bo". ⁸⁰

In order to obtain political benefit from the agreements signed by Ho Chi Minh, Hanoi announced on 13 October 1946, the reorganisation of the Nam Bo Provisional Executive Committee for the implementation of both the "6 March Preliminary Agreements" and the "14 September Modus Vivendi". Already, since 13 September, did the Hanoi Government, by Decree No.182, confer more power on the military arm of that same Provisional Committee by entrusting the "Direction of

Resistance in the Southern part of Central Viet Nam" to the "Resistance Committee in Nam Bo". Thus, Cochinchina (Nam Bo) was de facto unified with Central Viet Nam (Trung Bo), under the authority of the central Viet Minh Government in Hanoi. To increase embarrassment to French authorities, the Provisional Executive Committee and the Resistance Committee in Nam Bo both of which were created by the Viet Minh and not recognised by any Government in the world, were, then, deliberately related to the "Modus Vivendi" signed by representatives of Hanoi and Paris Governments.

The implementation of the Modus Vivendi, as planned in Hanoi, would give the resistance forces in the southern area time for regrouping while the appeal for "awareness and preparedness" among the Vietnamese population helped to deepen patriotic sentiments, to increase "defense forces", and, at the same time, to demolish the "separatist movement" as well as the Government of Dr. Thinh in Saigon. Besides, the circulation of the accusation term Viet gian (Viet traitor) scared everybody, especially when it was accompanied by terrorist activities.

"Awareness and preparedness" was also a slogan that guided all the activities of Hanoi Government during the absence of Ho Chi Minh, under the influence of Vo Nguyen Giap and his collaborators who were affirming the impossibility of lasting agreement with French authorities. Phillippe Devillers, writing the History

of Viet Nam (1940-1952), seemed correctly to understand the mind of Ho's real lieutenant, when he characterized the period of Viet-French negotiation in Paris with a chapter entitled: "Giap forged his arms".

Early in October 1946, while Ho Chi Minh was still on the Dumont d'Urville, Hanoi started a campaign of denunciation against the French. This campaign found full expression in an article published by Su That newspaper, No.57 (11 October 1946). A catalogue of alleged violations served to revile the enemies and to incite a "patriotic" anger against them:

In Nam-Bo (Cochinchina) and Nam Trung-bo (Southern part of Central Viet Nam), since 14 September, the policy of terror has been practiced more rigorously than ever before.... Vietnamese civilians have been slaughtered as never before. French troops tortured Vietnamese combatants with barbarous means which were never applied before. French reactionaries dared to pass criminal sentence on patriotic Catholics (Father Luat and Fr. Sang) and arrested some members of the Executive Committee for Nam Bo (Mai-van-Bo). Recently, they executed three southern patriotic personalities, among whom, the late M.P. Hoang-minh-Chau.

The sympathy and warm support that Hanoi wished to obtain from the Vietnamese population and other people in the world, were adroitly suggested, then, as unavoidable effects of those alleged crimes:

Those immoral and inhuman actions will only succeed in widening and deepening the struggle movement of the Southern people, in uniting more closely various religions and political parties of the Vietnamese, and in strengthening against them, the opposition of the progressive democratic elements throughout the world, especially in France. They do not understand that, in so acting, they themselves cause damage to the interests and the honour of France.

The article also suggested that the policy of "preparedness" advocated by Viet Minh leaders was correct, and "full responsibility" for war would devolve on the French:

The Vietnamese army never ceased to prepare for resistance against any offensive from the French!... Combatants in the rear area, members of the Executive Committee in the South, no one was so optimistic as to suspend his activities or to be unaware of reactionary schemes of the French!...
...French reactionary colonialists must certainly bear full responsibility for their actions in Indochina before the French people and before world opinion.

Obviously, Hanoi leaders appreciated the importance of world opinion and the influence of the French public upon French Government policy in Indochina, especially in an election year. Already in France, the Leftists with their organs, Le Populaire and L'Humanité, used the question of Indochina as a campaign issue. The election of 10 November 1946, in

fact, marked a new progress for the French Communist Party: together the Socialist Party and the Communist Party obtained more than 46% of the votes. Thus the Bidault Government was facing a deep political crisis while the situation in Viet Nam became more somber with every passing day. It was at this moment that Ho Chi Minh sent a letter, dated 11 November 1946, to G. Bidault, President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, to protest against "the unilateral establishment of a tax bureau at Haiphong harbour", which measure Hanoi Government found to be in conflict with the "Modus Vivendi". Again, Ho used a policy of moderation and friendly language to confuse his enemy:

I am confident that through your good offices, all instructions necessary for the rectification of those measures which are at variance with your agreements and susceptible of prejudicing the Viet-French entente to which our two Governments are bound, will be issued. 80

On 23 November 1946, President Ho made an appeal to the nation urging both "moderation" and "preparedness". It is, in fact, a veiled cri de guerre:

The situation in Lang-son has not yet been settled when the situation in Hai-phong becomes serious again. Not only did the French violate the agreements signed in the afternoon of 20 November....but this morning, they have made further demands which

we found unacceptable. Consequently, another clash has taken place....

...I appeal to all my compatriots to exercise moderation and I call on the regular army and the Tu-ve (national guards) to be ready to defend our national sovereignty and the lives and property of foreign residents.

The Government is always close by your side to protect our land.

The attack on Hanoi.

Soon after the return of President Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party leaders seemed to have reached a firm decision which agreed with the conviction of those hard liners such as Vo Nguyen Giap. This determination was made public in Su That (No.64, 29 November 1946) under the form of an appeal of the "Marxist Studies Association":

Dear compatriots!

French troops have started their offensive against us at Hai phong and Lang-son.

.....
Their activities in violation of Viet Nam's sovereignty are likely to spread to other areas. The situation is extremely critical. Be ready to fight in self-defense at any time and anywhere! Every Vietnamese citizen must earnestly fulfill his sacred duty of defending the sovereignty of the Fatherland.

United to fight, we will win.

That appeal became an order in the following issue of Su That (No.65, 4 December 1946) and the words of

the Marxist secretary general Truong Chinh sounded no less authoritarian than the order of an army general:

Determined to fight and ready to fight! French troops have violated our national territory in the South, the Centre and the North. They have violated the Preliminary Agreements of 6 March 1946 and the Modus Vivendi of 14 September 1946. Resistance has already been offered in all three regions. At any time, the resistance could become total and nationwide.

....Any advice to surrender, coming from enemy or self proclaimed "friend", should be firmly rejected. Any policy of appeasement, temporising, or cowardice, must be eliminated. Any agent for the enemy should be severely punished....Before making the assault against the enemy, we must free ourselves from all such impediments.

Once the order had been given, Vo Nguyen Giap and his military collaborators feverishly prepared a coup de force: the vệ quốc đoàn (national guards) helped the enthusiastic youth to form tự vệ (self-defense) platoons, to build barricades, to make ready weapons and ammunition while a partial, selective and methodical evacuation of the capital took place.⁸ The whole enterprise was shrouded in secrecy and was termed "a contingency plan" on the occasion of the French troops entering Hanoi after the alleged massacre of Hai-phong.

On the diplomatic front, Ho Chi Minh was still

receiving numbers of French visitors including the French negotiator Jean Sainteny who had developed much sympathy for the Viet Minh and had seemingly won Ho Chi Minh's confidence. Although warned by various sources that a sudden attack was scheduled to begin at 8 p.m., on 19 December 1946, the French negotiator was reluctant to believe it. As late as noon on 19 December, Sainteny received a letter from Ho Chi Minh complaining about "the tense atmosphere which he regretted", and urging the French representative "to find some means of ameliorating the climate" between France and Viet Nam. Only a few hours after receiving the warmest expressions of friendship from President Ho, Sainteny was taken by surprise that same evening, and seriously wounded in the attack the Hanoi leaders had meticulously prepared (See the inserted Official Order).

The explosion that blew up the electric power plant and plunged the whole city of Hanoi into darkness (19 December 1946), officially signaled the end of a period of Viet-French negotiations and marked the beginning of the nation-wide resistance war.

The first public document implicitly declaring war against the French, was an official order (see the following inserted page) issued by the Resistance Committee of Region II (which included Hanoi).

The official order began with the allegation that French troops had commenced hostilities in Hanoi, imposed martial law, and appealed for "Calm and Order".

It stipulated five points covering military, moral, psychological, political and diplomatic aspects of the war:

OFFICIAL ORDER

Compatriots in the Capital!

The French troops have opened fire at Hanoi

The Resistance Committee of Region II issues the following orders:

- 1). All acts liable to prejudice the national resistance in any way (supplying the enemy with food and munitions, spying on the enemy's behalf, giving him conventional signs, etc.) are strictly forbidden.
- 2). All acts of looting and rape are strictly forbidden.
- 3). The propagation of unfounded rumours to disturb the public is strictly forbidden.
- 4). The sheltering of traitors and pirates is strictly forbidden. Anyone who knows of the movements of traitors and felons must immediately report to the Resistance Committee of the locality.
- 5). All acts liable to harm the life and property of unoffending alien residents are strictly forbidden.

CALM - ORDER

There will be absolute obedience to the orders of the Resistance Committee. Any transgressor of the above orders will be executed according to Martial Law.

This Official Order will take effect from 20:00 hours on 19 December 1946 until further notice.

Hanoi 19 December 1946

The Resistance Committee of Region II

CÔNG - LỆNH

Đồng bào Thủ đô !

Quân Pháp đã khởi hân ở Hà-nội

Ủy-ban Kháng-chiến

Liên Khu II hạ lệnh :

1) Nghiêm cấm những hành-dộng có tính cách mua
hại cho cuộc kháng chiến (trợ tế cho giặc, do thám cho
giặc, giấu thông cho giặc, làm an-biện cho giặc v.v...)

2) Nghiêm cấm những hành-dộng cướp bóc trong
đàn và nắm, hiếp đàn bà.

3) Nghiêm cấm sự phao tin đồn nhảm làm
động nháo nhảm.

4) Nghiêm cấm việc chia cháp Việt - gian và
phân biệt. Những ai biết rõ hành-dộng của bọn
Việt - gian và thổ - phỉ phải lập tức báo ngay cho
Ủy - Ban Kháng - Chiến » khu phố biết.

5) Nghiêm cấm những hành-dộng xâm phạm đến
đàn cái và tính mệnh của ngoại - kiều lương thiện

BÌNH TĨNH - TRẬT TỰ

Dân chúng phải tuyệt đối tuân theo mệnh lệnh của V.D.K.C.

Ai phạm vào các điều nói trên sẽ bị xử theo quân luật

Lệnh này bắt đầu thi hành từ 20 giờ
ngày 12 tháng 12 năm 1946 cho đến khi có lệnh mới

Hà-nội, ngày 19 tháng 12 năm 1946

UBKC LIÊN KHU II

This poster had been printed in advance but for the sake of military security, the space for the time and date of the attack had been left blank, to be filled at the last moment. Later, the date 19 December became the commemorative day of National Resistance.

For so important an event, Ho must have prepared an appeal, as usual, to "show cause" and to win the people's hearts and minds and their full support of the Government's decision. But only at noon on 19 December, was a diplomatic letter sent to the French commissioner Sainteny. The president's appeal to the entire people to wage resistance war was tactfully dated 20 December 1946. The letter was necessarily brief and vigorous in style to convey the determination of the revolutionary leader. A word of self-justification and the warning that the French had invaded would suffice to alarm the entire people and to incite them to rise in arms:

Compatriots in all parts of the country! Since we desired peace, we made concessions. But the more compromising we are the more aggressive the French colonialists become. The reason is that they are resolved to invade our country once again.

No! We prefer to sacrifice everything rather than lose our country and be enslaved.

Compatriots! Rise up!

Men and women, old and young, regardless of creed, political party, or

nationality, whoever is Vietnamese must rise and fight the French colonialists to save our Fatherland. Those who have rifles will use their rifles; those who have swords will use their swords; if you have neither use hoes or sticks. No one can be excused from this endeavour to beat the colonialists and save our country.

Soldiers and militiamen!

This is the time for national salvation. We must sacrifice ourselves to the last drop of blood for the defence of our country.

Long live the independence and unity of Viet Nam!

Long live our victorious resistance!

"Fight to the end", Ho repeated this phrase to his compatriots in the next appeal included in an open letter "to the French people and the peoples of the Allied Nations", wherein he elaborated his accusation against the French:

....The French reactionary colonialists lack sincerity....In the South they... provoke the Vietnamese patriots. They oppress honest Frenchmen who advocate sincerity.... In the North, they provoke clashes.... They blockade the port of Hai phong, thus making it impossible for the Chinese, Vietnamese, other foreigners, and also the French residents to carry out their business.

...They have massacred old people, women, and children even in Hanoi, our capital.

On 19 December 1946, at 8 p.m., Hanoi was attacked.

The responsibility for "provoking a war" and "invading our country" had been ascribed to the French colonialists, Ho found it politic to give the order of "counterattack" while "respecting the lives and properties of foreign residents". Martial law was confirmed, not in military terms, but in inspiring terms of ethics, right and wrong, reward and punishment:

On behalf of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, I give the following orders to the soldiers, national guards, militia-men, and compatriots in the three regions of Viet Nam:

1. If the French troops attack us, we must fiercely counterattack them with all the weapons available. Every Vietnamese must rise up to protect the Fatherland.
2. We must protect the lives and properties of foreign residents and treat prisoners of war well.
3. Those who collaborate with the enemy will be punished. Those who help and defend their country will be rewarded.

Compatriots!

The Fatherland is in danger. All of us must stand up!

In the immediate aftermath of the hurried Independence Ceremony on 2 September 1945, conflicts were set

in motion between the many forces, movements and groupings destined to play their parts on the stage of the Indochina drama: Vietnamese, French and Chinese, Communist and Nationalist, Unionist and Separatist, Viet Minh, Viet Quoc and Viet Cach, to name only the principal participants. The Viet Minh Front, though it had succeeded in seizing power and establishing a "united central government", had no army: in the threatening atmosphere of dissension and conflict, in whatever direction it turned, the newly born Government, headed by Ho Chi Minh came face to face with the agonising question: "Hòa hay chiến?" (Peace or war?).

Unlike the historic Diên Hồng Congress which, when facing the same question, in the thirteenth century, had answered unambiguously: "Quyết chiến!" (Fight to the end) the Viet Minh leaders, in the period of 1945-46, chose rather to answer cryptically: "Hòa để tiến" (conciliation for future advance). Indeed, under the umbrella of a national united front, those undeclared Communists had to follow dangerous and tortuous political paths trying to make peace with each of their opponent groups by negotiation and compromise, for the sole purpose of gaining more time and strength to defeat their political enemies such as the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach after the departure of the Nationalist Chinese forces.

In dealing with the French who were immensely stronger in military forces and diplomatic relations,

the Viet Minh Front organised local resistance in Nam Bo while the central Government of Ho Chi Minh which was at pains to obtain diplomatic recognition (in re if not de jure), offered to negotiate with the French Government "nowhere but in Paris".

The whole year of 1946 was characterized by a consistent policy of apparent "conciliation with France", witness the Ho - Sainteny preliminary agreements, the Ha Long Bay meeting, the "good will" delegation to France, the Dalat Conference, Ho's presidential visit to France, the Fontainebleau negotiations, the Ho - Moutet modus vivendi, and other diplomatic niceties. It was, indeed, a period of preparation prescribed by the Central Committee of the undeclared Communist Party. But the violent incidents of Lang-son, Hai phong and Hanoi, precipitated armed conflict on a nation-wide scale. "Hanoi was attacked!", this ambiguous cri de guerre marked the end, to use a famous Chinese expression, of the tan tan (talk, talk) and the beginning of the ta ta (fight, fight) period which was tragically to last some eight years.

Political persuasion during the period of hostilities, which forms the subject of the next chapter, naturally concentrated on the aim of winning the war.

Footnotes for Chapter V

1. Nguyen Phut Tân, A Modern History of Viet Nam (Saigon, 1964), pp. 485 ff.
2. Ibid., pp.489-490
3. Ho Chi Minh, Những lời kêu gọi..., I, p.27
Italics added.
4. Ibid., Italics added.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Phillipe Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam de 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1952), pp.154-162.
8. Vo Nguyen Giap, Những Năm tháng không thể nào quên, Hanoi: Q.D.N.D, 1970, p.50.
9. Cờ Giải Phóng, No.20 (27 September 1945), reproduced in Cuộc Kháng Chiến Thần Thánh của Nhân Dân Viet Nam (Hanoi: Su That, 1958), vol.I, p.13.
10. Cờ Giải Phóng No.25, (14 October 1945)
11. Cuộc Kháng Chiến..., I, p.22.
12. Ibid., p.23.
13. Ibid., p.28.
14. Ibid., p.24.
15. Ibid., p.25-26.
16. Những năm tháng..., p.51.
17. Ibid., pp.51-52.
18. Su That, No.1 (5 December 1945).

19. Phật Thầy (Buddhist Prophet) was the title given to Huỳnh Phú Sổ, the founder and leader of the Hoa Hao politico-religious sect in South Viet Nam. An opponent of the Communists, Phật Thầy was eliminated by them.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, p.44.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Vo Nguyen Giap, Nhung nam thang...., p.66
27. Ibid., p.67.
28. Ibid., pp.66-67.
29. Su That, No.5 (20 December 1945).
30. Ibid.
31. Cuoc Khang Chien Than Thanh, p.40, Cf. Ibid., p.46.
32. Vo Nguyen Giap, Nhung nam thang...., pp.85-91.
33. Co Giai Phong, No.33 (18 November 1945).
34. Y Dân, No.4 (28 November 1945), Dan Chu No.104 (23 December 1945) and No.105 (24 December 1945), Su That, No.8 (30 December 1945).
35. Vo Nguyen Giap, op.cit., p.94
36. Su That, No.8 (30 December 1945).
37. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi...., I, p.70.

38. Ibid.
39. Su That, No.10 (6 January 1946).
40. Su That, No.21 (27 February 1946).
41. Vo Nguyen Giap, Nhung nam thang...., p.137.
42. Ibid., p.150.
43. Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., p.73.
44. See, for example, Doan Them, Nhung ngay chua quen (Saigon: 1967), p.70.
45. Vo Nguyen Giap, op.cit., p.148. Italics added.
46. Ibid., p.149.
47. Cuoc Khang Chien...., p.63.
48. Vo Nguyen Giap, op.cit., p.162.
49. Nguyen Kien Giang, Les grandes dates du Parti de la classe ouvrière du Viet Nam (Hanoi,,1960), p.56.
50. See V.N.Giap, op.cit., p.167; Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p.111
51. V.N. Giap, op.cit., p.168.
52. Nghiem Ke To, Viet Nam Mau Lua, pp.56-57.
53. Ibid., p.60.
54. Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh, p.113.
55. See the French text in Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1953), p.187.
56. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, pp.75-76.
57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., p.78.
59. Cuoc Khang Chien Than Thanh Cua Nhan Dan Viet Nam (Hanoi: Su That, 1958), I, p.81.
60. Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Một vài kí-vãng về hội nghị Da-lat (Saigon: Su Dia, 1971), pp.16-18.
61. Su That, Nos. 37 and 38 (25 May and 1 June 1946).
62. Su That, No.36 (18 May 1946).
63. Cuoc Khang Chien..., p.90.
64. Cuoc Khang Chien..., I, p.89 Italics added.
65. Ibid., p.94.
66. Ibid., p.96.
67. As reproduced in Cuoc Khang Chien Than Thanh..., pp.147-153.
68. Ibid., Italics added.
69. Nhung loi keu goi, I, pp.92-93.
70. Ibid.
71. Su That, No.22 (1 March 1946).
72. Su That, No.26 (14 March 1946).
73. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, p.240.
74. The late Bernard Fall was seemingly very much impressed by Ho's courteous offer and was wondering "what the Viet Nam situation would have been, had the offer been accepted". See B. Fall (ed.), Ho Chi Minh on Revolution (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), p.166.

75. See Hong Nam, "Các vấn đề chính trị ở Hội nghị Đà Lạt", Su That, Nos.37 and 38 (25 May and 1 June, 1946).
76. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, p.241.
Italics added
77. P. Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, ,p.306.
78. Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh (Paris: Ed.du Seuil, 1967), p.124.
79. Franc-Tireur newspaper, Paris, 15 August 1946.
80. Most survivors of the signatories of this proclamation were on the list of the National Liberation Front for South Viet Nam in the 1960's, and recently on the list of the "Provisional Government of South Viet Nam". This shadow government refused to be called Viet Cong and also claimed to be "the only representative authority of South Viet Nam".

Chapter VI

The nation-wide war and the Theme of TAT THANG (we will win).

The "tour de force" on the night of 19 December 1946 marked the end of negotiations and the beginning of a nation-wide war. With the general appeals of President Ho (dated 20 and 21 December 1946, according to Hanoi publications), a total and permanent mobilization started.

Instead of the beautiful democratic Constitution which had been presented at the National Assembly but never promulgated, martial law was imposed. The war provided an excellent excuse for the restriction of all democratic freedoms and the requirement of many sacrifices. But the evils of war tended to exhaust the forbearance of people and to give rise to many complaints. The Communist Government found it necessary to start a campaign of "winning hearts and minds".

Various forms of agit-prop.

Since the Resistance Government, hidden in the jungle or remote countryside, did not possess elaborate news dissemination media such as television, radio, or publishing houses, it was not easy to organise a political campaign or to send a message to any particular segment of the population. But in the areas controlled by the Viet Minh (mainly in the countryside

and the highlands), the undeclared Communist leaders went all lengths to make the best of whatsoever was available.

At first the Viet Minh spared no efforts in building a fascinating image of Ho Chi Minh as a "national hero", a "father of the nation", an "enlightened leader", a "veteran fighter against colonialists", a "living saint", and "a brother, a friend to everybody".

Since the words of such a paragon would necessarily command both respect and appreciation, it was little wonder that Ho became a most prolific letter writer. A careful reader could discern in Ho's writings much evidence of his great skill as a persuader. The effects of his oratory were clearly discernable among those people living under the Ho Chi Minh Government, especially in Zone IV (Thanh, Nghe, Tinh), a stronghold of the Resistance Movement from 1945 to 1954. But most of Ho's writings did not become available to his people until late in 1956, when Những lời kêu gọi của Hồ Chủ tịch (President Ho's Addresses and Messages) were published in a collection of six volumes in Vietnamese. The Tuyển Tập (Selected Works) appeared in 1960 and its foreign languages version one year later. Throughout the period of resistance, one booklet, Sửa đổi lối làm việc (Let us change our method of work), which was compiled by Ho Chi Minh and published in 1947 under the pseudonyme X.Y.Z., provided the "cadres of the Association" (i.e. the Communist party and other leaders) with a basic study document.

To compensate the lack of printed books and the peasants' opportunity to read, there were plenty of slogans on posters, streamers, and signboards along the roads. A splendid way of combining the power of slogans with traditional respect for authority was the distribution of Uncle Ho's pictures with a brief quotation of his revolutionary wisdom.

In addition to Ho's writings, an important source concerning the Viet Minh Front and its power seizure in 1945, was Truong Chinh's series of articles in Su That revised and published towards the end of 1946 under the title Cách Mạng Tháng Tám (The August Revolution). Another series from Su That (Nos. 70-81), was very well publicized later in book form and entitled Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi (The Resistance will win).

In the army, political persuasion was emphasized from the very beginning of the Cuu Quoc Movement. A training course had been meticulously prepared and published in 1945 as a booklet entitled Chính trị viên trong quân đội (Manual for Political Commissar in the Army, Hanoi: Trung Bac Tan Van Printing House). Moreover, every unit made all its efforts to issue bulletins or newsletters (very often written by hand) to "further political education for all soldiers".

Likewise, the Association of Writers and Artists had their periodical Văn Nghệ (Literature and Arts),

the Teachers their Giáo Dục (Education) the students their bích báo (wall poster), báo bướm ("butterfly paper"), báo tay (hand written journal) in order to develop their political study according to the three principles "Dân tộc, Khoa học, Đại chúng" (National, Scientific, Popular).

For the ordinary people, a vigorous "anti-illiteracy campaign" was launched to enable peasants to read communiques, slogans and papers. But the most popular vehicle for funneling political instruction to village inhabitants was study meetings which later were held almost daily in those hamlets completely under the Viet Minh control.

Periodically, a group of Văn-công (mission of literature and arts) came to "entertain" villagers with exhibitions, plays, songs, poems and motion pictures (later), all of which were politically orientated. From the early 1950's peasants were taught to sing new revolutionary songs and the young to dance to political tunes.

Traditionally, Vietnamese peasants have always loved chanting spontaneous folk songs, while baby-sitting, working at home, on the river or in the rice fields. The Viet Minh cadres did not lose any time in exploiting those ca, vè (ballads, odes) or hò (sung rhymes) for their work of political agitation. Because the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese people were peasants (most of them could not read too well), this form of propaganda reached virtually the whole population and proved to be highly effective in

mobilizing the masses.

The art of agit-prop which had been taught by Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, was adroitly applied in Viet Nam by the use of "internationalist content under nationalist form" or "revolutionary message under traditional cover". Furthermore, a great amount of Mao's teachings could be discerned as directly translated into the content of Communist political persuasion in Viet Nam.

The content of agit-prop.

The principal purpose of revolutionary propaganda as summarized in the Sổ tay nghiệp vụ tuyên truyền (Notebook for propaganda agents) was "to make the people understand, believe and follow our way". Concerning the anti-French war, the Communist Government took pains thoroughly to explain the duty and capability of the people, the full competence and strong leadership of the Government, to inspire the entire nation with total confidence in the final victory as the necessary outcome of the war.

A multi-aspect campaign continued relentlessly throughout the country for many years, using all devices to exploit every possible opportunity and to influence every person anywhere and at any time. One category of propaganda activity during the nation-wide war, was seen to be centred around these five general principles or axioms:

- I. Our resistance war is a just cause.
- II. The resistance must be waged by the whole nation.
- III. The resistance must be total.
- IV. The resistance is long lasting.
- V. The resistance will win.

I. The first Axiom of Resistance:
 Our Resistance War is a Just Cause
 (Chiến-tranh Chính-nghĩa)

Since the main purpose of political propaganda was to strengthen the people's motivation which could only spring from moral conviction, the first task was to give people a just cause for which they were supposed to dedicate their whole lives to fight.

National independence and democratic freedoms were recognised as the deepest aspirations of the people. Time and again, the Viet Minh leaders endeavoured to emphasise Doc-lap, Tu-do as presented in Chapter III. Then they created a sort of sacred triple motto to be used as a universal letter-head and a permanent theme for any writing: Doc-lap, Tu-do, Hanh-phúc (Independence, Liberty, Happiness) were inscribed everywhere. Once, people had appreciated those sacred rights and precious possessions, a cry against aggression or invasion would easily arouse the people's holy anger and thrust them to the battlefield.

From the beginning of Viet-French hostilities in Saigon (September 1945), Ho Chi Minh had solemnly declared Viet Nam's struggle as a sacred duty "for a just cause and for justice of the world". In December 1946, President Ho urged the whole nation to fight invasion. But, in February 1947, that sublime cause and noble motivation was explained in simple and concrete terms of the peasants' ordinary language:

Compatriots who love our country,
 Why must we wage the Resistance war?
 Because if we do not resist, the
 French will occupy our Country once
 more. They will enslave our people
 once more. They will force our
 people to be their coolies and sol-
 diers, and to pay them every kind of
 taxes. They will suppress all our
 democratic freedoms. They will
 plunder all our land and property.
 They will terrorize and massacre
 our brothers, sisters and relatives.
 They will burn down or destroy our
 houses, pagodas and temples. You
 will realize this by seeing what
 they have done in Hanoi and Haiphong.

Because we do not want to be buffaloes
 and horses to the French, because we
 must protect our country, we must
 fight the French colonialists. 1

Since most Vietnamese had experienced so much poverty and misery under the social injustice and oppression of the old regime, who among them would not be reeplly moved by such clear and stirring words?

The appeal of the "Association of Marxist Studies" in Su That newspaper, before the incident of 19 December 1946 had clearly distinguished the just from the unjust party:

French colonialists are extremely rapacious. Their actions are unjust since they serve only the selfish interests of a group of professional exploiters and oppressors.

On the contrary, our resistance war is totally just, because we fight in order to protect the just interests of a whole nation that wants to live a worthy life and refuses to be enslaved once again; because we struggle to defend the Preliminary Agreements, to consolidate the union, the friendship, and the equality between the two nations, Vietnamese and French. 2

Truong Chinh's booklet which served as a catechism of the resistance war, presented the aims of the war to justify it and to deduce its noble character just as Mao Tse-tung did in December 1936:

To oppose the faithless, unjust, insolent behaviour of the reactionary French Colonialists, the Vietnamese people must fight!...

To annihilate the French reactionaries, to defend themselves, to defend civilization and the cause of justice, the Vietnamese people must fight.

.....
The Vietnamese people must fight
to regain freedom and independence,

to defend and liverate themselves;
therefore our resistance war is a
revolutionary war, a people's war
of self-defence, a just and pro-
gressive war.... 3

Later, Vo Nguyen Giap, also following the
teaching of Mao Tse-tung, offered more explanations
to justify the war on the basis of a people's war:

The armed struggle of our people,
the long and heroic resistance of
our people... is a people's war.
It is so because it is an armed
form of struggle to fulfill the
basic duties of the national de-
mocratic revolution, to fulfill
the basic aspirations of our
people and our nation, and to solve
the basic contradictions in Viet-
namese Society. 4

For the Communists, the term nhân dân (people)
may have a different meaning from the term dân tộc
(nation), since the latter comprises all Vietnamese
whereas the former, understood on the basis of class
struggle is restricted to the masses of công-nông-binh
(workers, peasant, soldier). That delicate shade of
meaning was coyly hinted by Truong Chinh in 1947 while
using the term nhân dân in its ambiguous sense to av-
oid any direct revelation of Communism:

This resistance is a people's
war. The great majority of
our people are peasants. Al-
most all the combatants of the
regular army and of the guerillas
are also peasants. Consequently,
this resistance is in reality a

peasants' war led by the working class. 5

Time and again, the Communist leaders repeated to the whole nation to inculcate into every Vietnamese mind that basic canon of dogma: "A people's war is a just war". Later it was also corroborated by the assertion that resistance war was a necessary and realistic measure to destroy the root of all imperialist wars and to establish lasting peace in the world. 6

For that purpose, the first requirement was to mobilize the whole people for the Resistance.

II. The second Axiom of Resistance:

The Resistance War must be waged
by the entire nation
(Kháng chiến toàn dân).

Combining Mencious tradition of respect for people (dân) with the Leninist - Mao's concept of people's power, Ho Chi Minh did not let any opportunity pass him without emphasizing the necessity of total support and earnest collaboration from every Vietnamese. The basic principle was concisely formulated by Ho when he handed the Twelve Commandments to the troops:

People is the root of the country.
In the resistance war and the
national construction, the main
force is in the people...

.....
A tree can last only with deep roots;
likewise, the tower of success will
stand proud only on the solid base of
a united people. 7

As early as November 1945, Chiến Thắng (Victory) the organ of the Vietnamese National Guards had prepared the people with a series of articles concerning "Our resistance war", "Methods of resistance", "Military training course", "How did Chinese children contribute to their resistance war?", "Examples of resistance in Nam Bo", and various slanted news sheets.

Nam Bo (Southern part of Viet Nam) had been named "the Bronze Wall of Viet Nam", and the resistance was described in highly emotive terms and lavished with beautiful praises that easily elated national pride in every Vietnamese reader:

The bloody flag of Independence had been barely raised when the hoard of invading devils attempted to lower it in order to strangle our people once again.

...Facing the threat of genocide, our compatriots did not hesitate to throw themselves into the "death field" in order to secure life for the present and future generations. Our compatriots have braved all perils to maintain the Independence flag and the honour of our nation, to be worthy of our forefathers, to wash away with their blood the dishonourable stain of foreign domination, and to add new pages to our glorious national history.

Vietnamese blood has been shed! The whole Vietnamese people lay down together forming an unshakable fortress to break all waves of invasion. 8

On the "commemoration of six months of resistance" (19 June 1947), Ho, the veteran revolutionary and skillful persuader, chose to express the same ideas in slogan form for stronger impact:

For the whole nation of Viet Nam:

A single aspiration : To be free
 A single will : To save the country
 A single aim : To fight for Unity
 and Independence

Our compatriots' union of hearts forms
 a bronze wall round our Fatherland:
 crashing into such a wall, however
 wild and cunning our enemy may be, he
 will be smashed. 9

Another approach in Chiến Thắng was to alert Vietnamese people against the danger of "a total massacre by the invading force", and to urge all citizens to organise such a general resistance that "wherever he goes, whomever he meets, the enemy will encounter nobody but a formidable soldier resisting against invasion".

Again, the slogan expert Ho preferred another way of expressing the same idea when he sent a message to the guerillas per their newsletter Quân du kích in 1949:

Let us so organise that every
 citizen becomes a fighter and
 every village a fortress.

Let us so organise that where-
 ever the enemy troops go, they
 will be harrassed, opposed and
 eliminated whereas our troops
 will meet everywhere kindness
 and help, both material and moral. 10

Since resistance was the duty of all Vietnamese, particular works were suggested to every grouping, every age and every walk of life. ¹¹ Chinese exemplars such as the seventy-year-old lady Trieu Thai, who by her courageous co-operation had earned the title "Mother of Guerillas", were cited to encourage maximum enthusiasm in resistance. Vietnamese women whose activities had been traditionally restricted into housework, were urged to involve themselves in politics and in resistance, following the glorious examples of the Trung Sisters, Lady Trieu, Nguyen thi Minh Khai, and the like.

An extract from the booklet Kinh nghiệm Tàu (Chinese experience) presented the "Association of Chinese children for National Salvation" with their legendary feats during the war against the Japanese. Their efficient roles in different fields were explained: "Little teachers group" in the anti-illiteracy campaign; "Food group"; "Grass clearing group", "Manure Group" in the "production increase campaign"; "Collection group" in raising funds for the Government; "Liaison group", "Security group", "Intelligence group" in helping guerillas and militiamen for national defence... Some precocious heroes were especially mentioned to enhance heroism. Thus one Vũ-Thông, 15 year-old, was praised for "having grabbed a machine gun from behind the Japanese lines", and one Long-Bang, a 14 year-old, was given credit for "the destruction of a Japanese airfield together with eleven airplanes in it!" ¹²

Those stories were the precursors of a long series of publications concerning "outstanding individuals", "emulation winners" and "national heroes" throughout the resistance war. This method of diễn - hình (typical exemplar) was widely applied and proved to be highly effective in promoting active participation in the resistance war.

When the people were sufficiently prepared to accept the hardships of the resistance war, Truong Chinh outlined various duties for them and sternly warned "those who should neglect their duties" of the firmness of the Government:

The whole people must properly aim at the defeat of our enemy. Everyone, then, must take part in the patriotic emulation and obey the decree of total mobilization, issued by the People's Government. At the present time, no one is allowed to wander idly outside the resistance campaign. He who has money should contribute his money, he who has strength should contribute his strength, and he who is endowed with mental power should contribute his mental power. Except some special cases, any citizen who reaches the legal age must join the army or the military organization in order to fulfil his civil duties. This is the moment to implement the motto "general resistance from the total population". This is the moment that the rich should contribute rice while soldiers sacrifice their life, and the poor their work. This is the moment severely to punish traffickers and profiteers or those

who evade their duties. The People's Government is humane but also very determined, indeed. 13

To those who were still perplexed by the question "peace or war?", such a directive and style of the Indochinese Communist Party's general secretary would suffice to provide a practical advice.

III. The third Axiom of Resistance:

The Resistance must be total
(Kháng chiến toàn diện).

All the Vietnamese people were required to take an active part in the resistance and to carry out the struggle in every field so that the enemy would be swamped in a hostile ocean that would make him deaf and blind, hungry and paralyzed, and finally choke him to death, as explained in Su That paper:

Our whole people must fight,
and fight in every field:
military, political, economic
and cultural. No matter where
the enemy goes, he will encounter
a strong resistance that will
surround him and strangle him,
making it impossible for him to
survive unharmed on our land. 14

Directing his appeals to the masses, Ho Chi Minh explained this multi-aspect resistance in the popular language of slogans:

Diệt Giặc Đói
Diệt Giặc Dốt
Diệt Ngoại Xâm

Let us destroy our triple enemy,
Hunger, Ignorance and Invasion.

Every Vietnamese citizen,
without distinction of age, sex,

or status, must become a fighter
 on a front : military, economic,
 political or cultural. Let us
 implement the double slogan :
 Toan Dan Khang chien (Nation-wide
 Resistance).

Toan Dien Khang chien(All-out Resistance). 15

Subsequently, the Communist leaders went all lengths to mobilize, educate, organise, and inspire every citizen to contribute his best in any field of activity.

1) In the military field.

Because the war was essentially a competition between two armed forces, military struggle should be given primary consideration. Now, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam was little more than one year old and its army scarcely exceeded outline on Vo Nguyen Giap's papers, whereas France was a major world power with a military tradition reaching back over many centuries. Moreover, such outstanding generals as Valluy and Leclerc had organised in the capital of Viet Nam a military parade that noticeably impressed the inhabitants of Hanoi. Actually, most Vietnamese remained apprehensive of a military disaster which might result from the armed conflict between Hanoi and Paris. Ho Chi Minh was facing the same situation Mao had confronted in 1937-38 when the powerful forces of Japan invaded China. Ho, having learned the lesson from Mao's experience, began to refute "defeatism" and cited the Viet Minh experience of 1944-45 to inspire self-confidence to his junior comrades and his resis-

tance followers. To the military superiority of the French forces, Ho opposed the determination of the people and the skilful planning of the Vietnamese leaders, since the beginning the Viet Minh Liberation forces:

To liberate ourselves, we must fight the Japanese fascists and the French. To fight them we must have military forces which cannot be created without organisation. But very necessary to any successful organisation, are planning and determination.

.....

Formerly, in the struggle against both enemies, Japanese and French, we started from nothing, and yet, we succeeded in mustering a great force, the Liberation Army, to overthrow them. Today, we have to fight only one enemy i.e., French reactionary colonialists and yet we now have the National Assembly, the Government, the (Viet Minh) Front, the great forces of National Guards and militiamen, the support of twenty million compatriots, and the favourable public opinion of the whole world. Our resistance, therefore, will win. 16

The details of the military plan are beyond the scope of this thesis but it is useful, from the viewpoint of political persuasion, to see how the plan was gradually presented to the people by means of general guide-lines which will form the content of part C of this chapter.

2) In the economic field.

Following Mao's advice that "military activities without an economy will result in suicide", the Vietnamese Communist leaders earnestly appealed to the people to spare no efforts in building up a self-sufficient economy in order to continue a protracted war.

To stimulate the people's eagerness in implementing the Government's decision despite all the hardships involved, the shrewd communist persuaders chose to make people victims of an economic aggression and exhorted them to counter-attack by building a stronger economy or to increase production by all means.

Thus, the Su That editor sounded an alarm against the enemy's economic attack:

The enemy attacked us not only in the military and political field, but also in the economic field, for example, by blockade, plunder or sabotage of our supply lines. We, therefore, must also counter-attack in the economic field....

Our resistance against the French in the economic field has two aspects: one negative and one positive. The former consists in destroying the enemy's economy while the latter is building ours....

The upgrading of our economy should follow these two principles:

1. To achieve National Construction while continuing the resistance war.
2. To accomplish Self-supply in every field. 17

3) In the cultural field.

According to the Marxist dialectic, culture is a reflection of economy and politics. If resistance is to be carried on in economic and political fields, naturally it should be reflected in the new culture.

Applying the usual dualistic reasoning into this field, Truong Chinh authoritatively advised all "cultural workers":

Culture is also a battle front of our people. Our resistance in this field consists in a double task.

Firstly, we must get rid of the obscurantist culture, introduced by French Colonialists to foster their invasion.

Secondly, we have to build a new democratic culture for our country. 18

Early in 1946 in his letter to the Southern Compatriots, President Ho had warned his countrymen of the "cultural invasion" and the "psychological war" on the part of the French. Appealing for calm and preparedness, Ho reminded his people of the famous advice of Nguyen Trai, a highly respected scholar-general who successfully conducted resistance against Chinese invasion in the fifteenth century:

Military attack only comes second whereas psychological offensive is of primary importance.

This was the reason why, in the early stages of the resistance war, President Ho addressed a special letter to the intellectuals and cultural workers in Nam Bo, urging them to use their pens as weapons of resistance:

Your pens are also effective weapons to fight for the right against the evil. Intellectuals and cultural workers, therefore, should fight as heroically as the combatants on the battlefield for the unification and independence of the country. 19

The following year, a national cultural conference was organised with a view to fostering the resistance. A message of Ho Chi Minh suggested some concrete duties for cultural workers:

Cultural activities are destined not only to mobilize the spirit and the forces of resistance and national construction but also to inform the whole world of our great successes in resistance and national construction. Our cultural men should produce worthy works, not only to glorify the achievements of our resistance and national construction in our time, but also to preserve the heroic examples of resistance and national construction for future generations. 20

But in the first period of resistance, Truong Chinh, the official theoretician of the Communist Party, still deplored "the remnants of colonialist culture among the cadres and people", the "insufficient mobilization" of cultural forces, their indifference or even "doubts of our final victory" and the lack of guidance and planning.

To correct those shortcomings, Truong Chinh called for "further efforts" and outlined some principal duties in the cultural field:

All cultural workers should seek to glorify and regenerate the people's collective heroism, and to incite maximum hatred among our soldiers and people against the enemy, thus fostering their eagerness to fight the enemy and their preference for death over surrender. Their work must aim at welding our people into a single bloc in support of the Government, with a firm confidence in national salvation and perseverance in trials and hardships. Their work must aim at doing whatever possible to dishearten the enemy troops making them depressed, and causing them to desert the enemy and to pass over to our ranks i.e., to the right path. 21

To achieve those aims, the editor of Su That suggested several means such as pictures, drawings, handbills, posters, fly papers, songs, dances, talks These measures were familiar to most Western Countries, but they were novelties to most people in

Viet Nam's countryside where an anti-illiteracy campaign had barely started. Those people had, on the other hand, their traditional forms of culture which the Communist leaders refused to leave unexploited:

We are not afraid to use the forms of propaganda of the old culture which are very familiar to the broad masses and most effective in influencing them. The various styles of folk song such as "Trống quân", "Quan họ", "Hát dặm" and "Hát bội", for instance, should be widely used with a new context and a new spirit of art. 22

That "cultural renewal", as explained by the Party leaders after 1956, ultimately consisted in "permeating the whole population with socialist ideas", "developing the Communist concept of man", and "establishing Marxism-Leninism as the ideology of the whole people". 23

However, in waging the resistance war, the Communist Party did not wish to alienate intellectuals and cultural workers by such a blunt revelation. The Secretary General of the Party, therefore, chose to formulate the guiding principle for "resistance in the cultural field" in a very mild and attractive way:

The enemy is trampling on our fatherland. The whole nation is struggling heroically. At present, every cultural activity should be in accord with the slogan: "Love for the country and hatred against the enemy". 24

4) In the political field.

The importance of political activities in the resistance war was embodied in President Ho's advice to his military cadres:

Military science deprived of political training is comparable to a tree without roots which becomes useless and even harmful. 25

This is the reason why early in 1946, after the hostilities took place in Nam Bo, Ho Chi Minh issued a warning to the people:

At the present time, in addition to the military war, the French colonialists are waging a war of nerves against us. Their psychological offensive appears in a series of fly papers, slogan posters, disturbing rumours, a whole campaign waged for the purpose of drowning our people in confusion and worry. 26

That accusation leveled against the enemy also reflected the plan of reaction on the part of the resistance government. Actually, President Ho missed no opportunity of giving a speech or sending a message to further the cause of political persuasion. This was, indeed, an aspect of his ideological conviction as confirmed by his own words:

Someone may say : Uncle Ho is pushing arts into politics. True, Culture and art, like any other activities, cannot remain outside but must form an integral

part of economics and politics. 27

The same basic idea was given full expression by the Marxist theoretician when he listed the various political measures as required for the success of resistance:

The tasks demanded from the resistance in the political field are very heavy. To fulfill them we must, on the one hand, consolidate the democratic republican State, invigorate the machinery of resistance, unify all military administrative, and popular organisations throughout the country, foster the growth of all patriotic organisations, consolidate the leading organ of the people's long resistance, and subordinate military questions to political leadership. On the other hand, it is our political duty to purge the machinery of resistance of all traitors, wreckers, opportunists, cowards, bureaucrats, militarist and factionalist elements, to suppress counter-revolutionaries, to kill the germs of division and disruption among the people, and to strive for the strengthening of our political rear. 28

Those political tasks were incorporated into the ten-point guidelines. These will be presented later, in ~~this~~ chapter^{vii} together with the persuasive recommendations from the Communist leaders, to secure implementation of those lines. But those same tasks were publicised by the editor of Su That in the form of a Hegelian formula:

Đoàn kết toàn dân
Cờ lập kẻ thù
Kháng chiến thắng lợi

Union of the whole people!
Isolation of the enemy!
Victory of the resistance!

5) In other fields.

Furthermore, any activity planned by the Resistance Government should be welcomed as a contribution to the resistance. Thus, in June 1948 President Ho advised people in several provinces that "the maintenance of dikes against flood was also a part of the resistance war".²⁹ In the same vein Prime Minister Pham Van Dong four years later, alerted people of "the enemy's plan to destroy crops, bridges, dikes, dams and irrigation systems", and appealed for greater efforts in resistance works.

On another occasion, Ho Chi Minh endeavoured to relate the cultural enemy of illiteracy or ignorance with the invading enemy, in order to promote deeper aversion towards illiteracy and higher enthusiasm in fighting illiteracy:

Ignorance is also an enemy.
Ignorance serves as an ally to
our invading enemy. The latter
attacks us with brute force
whereas the former wages an
offensive against our spirit.
The colonialist enemy relies
on his ally, ignorance, to

implement his strategy of obscurantism while ignorance enlists our colonialist enemy to mistlead us into darkness.

In eliminating ignorance, our troops are destroying a supporting force of the colonialists. 30

Specialists and technicians were certainly very necessary to the resistance but too often they resented their loss of status to the công-nông-binh (worker, peasant, soldier) bloc. Ho Chi Minh, however, did not neglect them but he even emphasized their importance and assured them of the special regard of the whole nation. Medical professionals, for instance, were invited to a Conference of the Medical Corps (March 1948) to see for themselves the exemplary industry and enthusiasm of many medical cadres or heroes such as Dr. Nguyễn Văn Thuyết, Dr. Đặng Văn Ngũ and Dr. Tôn Thất Tùng, and to hear the reassuring words of the benign Uncle:

We have two simultaneous duties: resistance war and national construction. Consequently, specialists, especially in the medical field, will be in great demand and will not be superfluous. Therefore specialities, particularly medicine, will be highly recognised, and certainly those who are practicing medicine will do their best to satisfy the needs of our compatriots. 31

But the highest need which the resistance Government was aspiring for, was doubtless a final victory

over the French. To achieve this national purpose, every person in every field of activity must earnestly co-operate with the Government and totally contribute to the war of resistance. Such a message was repeated time and again, under every form and by every means to each one and all of the Vietnamese, both inside and outside the country. But it took the fatherly and persuasive President Ho, to summarize the toàn dân, toàn diện (all-people, all fields) requirements and various duties in his May Day message of 1949. It is remarkable that such an intransigent revolutionary leader, on such an emotive occasion, was flexible enough to address the nation in the traditional terms of social classification Sĩ, Nông, Công, Thương (Intellectuals, Peasants, Workers, Traders) with the addition of Binh (Soldiers):

In our country, May Day has a special significance....
May Day is a festival for all our Compatriots....
On this occasion, I would like to remind the various strata of our people of their main tasks to be fulfilled:

1. Binh: Soldiers should strive to kill many enemies, seize many military bases, persuade many enemy soldiers to desert, grasp their weapons, and earnestly participate in the training of cadres and the refining of troops. They should make further efforts to widen guerilla warfare in the rear of our enemy

and inside their area, with a view to weakening the enemy and strengthening our forces.

2. Si: Students should be studious and receive military training while specialists continue their research for discoveries and inventions to help our army against the enemy, and to better the living of our people.

Artists and writers should produce creative works for the mobilization of our national spirit and the propaganda of our resistance war to other nations.

Civil servants should practice to the best of their abilities the four basic virtues cần, kiêm, liêm, chính (industry, thrift, probity and righteousness).

Their work should reflect a fighting spirit, a scientific method and a democratic manner to make known the Government's policy to every citizen.

3. Nông: Peasants are expected to grow rice, grains, and cotton sufficiently to provide our army and our people with food, clothing and commodities; to protect the crops, safely to hide the rice and readily to supply the army and Government Offices with foodstuffs; to organise fortified villages for resistance....

4. Công: Workers have to manufacture many tools and weapons to supply the people and to fight the enemy... They should safeguard the factories and sabotage the enemy's economy by every possible means.

5. Thưởng: Traders should contribute to the growth of Commerce, the betterment of supply services, the sale of local products, the purge of black markets, and the stability of Vietnamese currency.

The resourceful war leader furthered the list with four more general duties for people of every walk of life in order "to push forward the struggle and to prepare for the general counter-offensive to win final victory":

For the entire people:

6. To close ranks in the broad united front against the enemy's scheme of division. To avoid subjectiveness and under-estimation of the enemy. To oppose the tendency to compromise and appease.
7. To assist the army, militia and guerilla fighters, to protect secrecy for the army and government offices; to participate in the detection and repression of spies, and the blockades of the enemy's economy.
8. Willingly to pay taxes and actively to take part in the Resistance War.
9. Compatriots in the enemy-occupied area should organise themselves closely and secretly to sabotage the enemy in favour of our resistance, and be ready to rise up on receiving the order for a general counter-offensive.
10. Every citizen is expected to strive for patriotic emulation in every field. 32

Thus, the list of ten promises of happiness ³³ given in August 1945 was replaced four years later, by a list of ten categories of duties which are overwhelmingly heavy indeed. Both lists were highly persuasive in language and people were conditioned to put the blame for such an onerous substitution on the "enemies of the people", namely "French colonialists" and "Viet counter-revolutionaries". Freedom, Happiness" was constantly recalled to everybody by all audio-visual means as a necessary goal to aim for. That "promised land", however, was said to lie beyond the indispensable triple bridge of:

Toàn dân (Nation-wide)
Toàn diện (All-out) and
Trường kỳ (Long-term) Resistance.

IV. The fourth Axiom of Resistance:

The Resistance must be enduring
 (Kháng chiến trường kỳ).

The Chiến Thắng (Victory) paper of the Viet Nam National Guards, No. 1 (4 November 1945), had drawn experience from the Chinese resistance to explain the method of long-term resistance:

Long resistance consists in protracting the war in order to win the final victory. It does not consist in submitting all our forces to a decisive test on the battlefield in the early phase of the war, but

rather in fighting a war of attrition gradually to decimate the enemy forces while developing and consolidating our main forces. The victory of China (over Japan) is, indeed, a concrete proof of the importance of long-term resistance.

Plagiarising a speech of Mao Tse-Tung ("On Protracted War", May 1938), Truong Chinh expounded the strategy of protracted war in Su That paper and later published the revised series in form of a pamphlet:

Protracted war is the secret of success. Why? - Because when we make a comparison, we see clearly that the enemies are strong but we are weak as yet; their country is industrial while ours is agricultural; they have airplanes, tanks, battle ships, whereas we have only rudimentary weapons. Their troops have been well trained and ours are beginners...

In a protracted war, with our efforts, our forces increase while theirs decrease. Their spirit will go lower and their finances will run short. As the war is prolonged, our people become more unified at home while abroad we win more support from the world movement of democracy. On the contrary, as our enemies continue the war, the anti-war and the democratic movements in France are rising to withhold their hands. Moreover, the revolutionary movements in different French colonies will require the enemies to scatter their forces, and on the international

stage, our enemies will be more isolated. To achieve those favourable results, we must have time. Time is on our side; time is our master strategist if our people are determined to wage a persevering resistance. 34

After two years of war, people living under the Viet Minh control were accustomed to the way of life in a small closed world with only "one-way information". Cuu Quoc, the only paper available to ordinary people, at the local government office, continued to publish news of success and victories of the guerillas throughout the country while Zone IV (Thanh-Nghe-Tinh), a stronghold of the Viet Minh, was generally safe from any French attack (See the map of victories in Appendix D2, page 476). People were, then, conditioned to see a realization of the Viet Minh's prediction. In this favourable political climate, a message from President Ho, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the nation-wide resistance (19 December 1946), came to many peasants as a reliable confirmation, especially when accompanied with clear figures and impressive statistics:

The French government has been overthrown more than ten times...
 Each month, from 800 to 1,000 enemy soldiers were eliminated by us...
 ...Their economy in our country went bankrupt, and decreased by 96.97 per cent.
 ...The enemy forces are decreasing and being weakened. Their situation is comparable to the setting sun.

Our Resistance which did not know anything but hardship in the first year, has made some progress in the second year. The third year, none-the-less, will bring it nearer to success. 35

On the sixth anniversary of the Democratic Republic, the hardship of war was compared to a painful operation for the cure of "colonialism disease", and the long-term resistance to a recuperation period. 36

This "plain-folk" approach was also used with a realistic tone in president Ho's political report to the second National Assembly of the Viet Nam Workers' Party in February 1951:

The resistance war must be long enduring: since our territory is narrow, our population small, and our country poor, we need a long period of preparation and a preparation which involves the entire nation and covers all fields. Also should we always bear in mind that compared to us, the French enemies are quire strong and they benefit from American and British assistance.

Since they are a "thick peel-mandarine" we need time to "sharpen our finger nails" before tearing them to pieces. 37

Ho's way of using ordinary language and popular sayings to drive home some unfamiliar idea or strategy, proved to be highly effective among the Vietnamese of whom the majority were peasants. But his personal ingenuity coupled with his early Chinese literary studies, was also apparent in his "politics of language".

An example can be cited also from his 1951 political report:

The enemy nurtured the strategy of a lightning war. To their wish of a quick solution by swift attacks and sweeping victories, our Party and Government opposed the strategic slogan "Long-term Resistance".

When the enemy schemed the sowing of dissension among our people, we confronted them with the slogan "Unity of the whole nation".

Thus, from the very beginning, our strategy has prevailed over the enemy's. 38

Such a "witty argument" was known among Vietnamese as the tactic of "smoke bomb" in argumentation.

The favourite approach of the Communist leaders however, remained the historical one, being convinced as they were, of the necessary historical development in favour of the proletariat. Faithful, therefore, to the Marxist-Leninist tradition, Ho Chi Minh skillfully explained the long-term resistance war to military cadres at a political training session in October 1951, drawing arguments from Vietnamese history and the revolutionary experiences of Russia and China.

In the past, our forefathers had to sustain long-term resistance before successfully repelling the invaders.

Under the Tran Dynasty, resistance had to be endured three times in order to defeat the Yuen. The Le

dynasty suffered only one period of resistance but it took ten years to repulse the Ming.

Not too long ago, friendly foreign countries had also to resort to long-term resistance to win over the invaders. Russia had to wage a resistance war from 1917 to 1922 for the expulsion of the imperialists. And then a struggle against the Trotskyites followed. Subsequently it took successive five-year-plans to rebuild the country.

In the second World War, Russia won over the German Fascists only after five years of war. Likewise, China had to endure thirty years of resistance war in order to eliminate the reactionaries in the country and to banish the imperialist invaders from outside.

Our resistance war is a continuation of the August Revolution. Just like the resistance wars of Russia and China, our resistance to be successful must be a long term war. 39

Fired by patriotism and hatred against the enemy, swept by political persuasion and the exciting atmosphere of new independence, new democracy and new leadership, Vietnamese people took part in the resistance war. In fact, those who were living under the Viet Minh's control, did not have any feasible alternative. But human endurance always has a limit. After a few years of war and hardship, people grew more and more impatient and began to raise thorny questions: How long would the long-term resistance be?

When and how would the war end? The Resistance Government refused to be caught by surprise and had prepared some canny answer in various study documents:

Long-term Resistance may last five years, two years, or fifteen years ... The most important factor lies in our unity and our determination. If all the people try their best and enthusiastically participate in the emulation campaign, the war may be shortened and final victory will come sooner. 40

As President Ho said: "The nearer the victory, the harder the resistance", our people may have to endure more trials ... However, if in the past few years we have overcome many obstacles and hardships. We are confident that we shall overcome whatsoever difficulty in the future. After all, our resistance will win. 41

V. The fifth Axiom of Resistance:

The Resistance will win
(Khang chien nhat dinh thang loi).

During the period of war, obviously victory was the goal set up for the resistance, the motive force for all activities, the key note for political persuasion, and the core of all publications.

The topic of "confidence in final victory", was presented in various forms, by all media of communication, and strongly emphasised in Ho Chi Minh's

presidential message, Su That (Truth) paper, study meetings and especially in Truong Chinh's pamphlet: Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi (The Resistance will win). Every possible means was used to inculcate into the mind of every Vietnamese subject the five axioms of resistance, of which "final victory" was the essential point.

That message was considered vital for the continuation of the resistance war and the consolidation of the Government. This was the reason why some time after the public appearance of the Viet Nam Workers' Party the Communist leaders issued a highly interesting pamphlet, to be used as a study document for the Army and all the people. Its title summarizes the whole theme, the conclusion, and the purpose of the study campaign: Kháng chiến trường kỳ gian khổ nhất định thắng lợi (The long and hard resistance will certainly win). It could be considered a completely revised summary of Truong Chinh's booklet, Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi (1947). Intended for popular use (many people had barely learned to read and to write), and written in a very simple and concise style, the pamphlet presented only eleven lessons in forty four pocket-size pages. Each lesson was clearly divided into two or three parts covering on average only four small pages, including the brief "purpose of the lesson" (about three lines) and the "questions for discussion".

This booklet which was a typical study document having all the qualities necessary to be highly effective in political persuasion, served very well the purpose of popularizing the five axioms of resistance with a view to "mobilizing the whole population to push forward the resistance war until final victory". The outline of the document, therefore, deserves to be reproduced here as a sample of the literature of political persuasion in North Viet Nam.

The long and hard Resistance will certainly win.

Edited by the Committee of Propaganda and Education,
part of the Political Department.

Lesson 1. Why Resistance?

- 1). Eighty years of oppression and exploitation by French colonialists.
- 2). French colonialists and American interventionists intend to enslave our people once again.
- 3). Our determination in fighting the enemies to save our country.

Lesson 2. Whom do we fight?

Questions for discussion:

- 1). Who are the enemies of our people?
- 2). At the present time, who is our principal enemy?

Lesson 3. What are the purposes of our resistance war?

- 1). To regain independence, freedom, and happiness for our people.

- 2). To make a positive contribution to the defense of world peace.

Lesson 4. Who are members of the Resistance?

- 1). All our people are fighting.
- 2). Working people are the main forces (under the leadership of the "Labour Party").
- 3). The workers' class is the one to lead the Resistance.

Lesson 5. Our progress throughout 7 years of resistance.

- 1). In the military field.
- 2). In the political field.
- 3). In the economic field.
- 4). In the cultural field.

Lesson 6. The principal conditions which guarantee the success of our Resistance.

- 1). Our resistance is a just cause, shared by our entire people and supported by the whole world.
- 2). Our Resistance is guided by the clear-sighted leadership of President Ho and the Viet Nam Workers' Party.
- 3). We have a broad National United Front.
- 4). Our people's government has become better consolidated every day.
- 5). Our people's army grows stronger every day.
- 6). We benefit from the support of our international friends.

Lesson 7. Some of our principal difficulties:

- 1). Our military forces do not yet measure up to their combat duties.
- 2). Our production does not adequately answer the needs of the frontline.

Lesson 8. The unsurmountable weaknesses of the French side.

- 1). Bankruptcy of French economy and politics.
- 2). Low morale among French troops.
- 3). Inadequate effective force.
- 4). French lackeys are ostacized by our people and their traitorous troops have no fighting spirit.

Lesson 9. Long duration and hardships of the resistance war.

- 1). The resistance should be long.
- 2). The resistance should be hard.

Lesson 10. Our Resistance must be based on self-sufficiency.

- 1). Self-sufficiency is essential.
 - a). Liberation depends upon us.
 - b). Help from friendly countries has certain limits.
- 2). Requirements for self-sufficiency:
 - a). Courageous fighting to eliminate the enemies.
 - b). Extensive propaganda to educate and to help the people.
 - c). Generous efforts in raising production and practising thrift.

Lesson 11. The Resistance will certainly win.

- 1). Our Resistance will win because:
 - a). We have many basic conditions favourable for victory.
 - b). The enemies suffer unsurmountable weaknesses.
- 2). Wrong ideas to be purged:
 - a). Over-optimism;
 - b). Pessimism and inconstancy;
 - c). Excessive reliance on brotherly countries.

Expressing the aim of the study campaign, the pamphlet, in its conclusion (p.41), emphasizes self-confidence and firm belief in the final success:

Our struggle with the enemy continues to be bitter and wild. We still have to fight a long war and to endure many hardships. But it will necessarily result in "victory for us and defeat for the enemy". This is the unshakeable belief of all of us.

"Victory for us and defeat for the enemy", that dictum was consecrated to be an ubiquitous slogan during the whole period of war. The usual formulae of letter-ending such as "Chào thân ái" (Greetings of friendship), "Chào:Độc-lập" (Greetings of Independence), had to give place to a new one: "Chào:Quyết thắng" (Greetings of determination to win). Later, on

May Day 1952, President Ho offered a more explicit slogan, culled from the revolutionary writings of Mao Tse-tung ⁴²: Ta nhất định thắng, Địch nhất định thua (We are certain of victory, the enemy of defeat). This slogan was often repeated in various presidential messages, in officials' and cadres' speeches; it also appeared in newspapers, posters, streamers, signboards, and so forth, as a constant reminder to everybody, everywhere, that there was a just war to fight and to win at all cost.

But fighting the war was not the only preoccupation of the Communist leaders. While the brutal war and the scorched earth tactic demolished innumerable buildings and human lives, the Marxist promoters found favourable conditions to urge the abolition of traditional ideas and practices, then to suggest and foster "a new way of life suitable to the new situation". This was the programme of "new democracy" listed under the head title of Kiến Quốc (nation building), an urgent duty which required, for its implementation, the "ten-point guidelines" as presented in the following chapter.

Footnotes for Chapter VI

1. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyên Tập (Hanoi, 1960), p.256.
2. Su That, No. 64 (29 November 1946).
3. Truong Chinh, The Resistance will win (Hanoi: 1960), pp.27, 28 and 31. *Italics added.* Cf. Mao Tse-tung, "On the question of strategy in the revolutionary War of China", Selected Works, Vol. I.
4. Vo Nguyen Giap, Chiến tranh nhân dân và quân đội nhân dân (Hanoi: Su That, 1959) pp. 130-131. *Italics added.*
5. Truong Chinh, op.cit. p.33.
6. See for examples : Ho's letter to the Peace Congress in Viet Nam (1950) and Ho's appeal on 19 December 1953 Rf. Tuyên Tập, Hanoi, 1960 pp. 345 and 470.
7. Ho Chi Minh, "Mười hai điều răn" (5 April 1948); Rf. Quan doi nhan dan (Hanoi, 1962), pp.57-58.
8. Chiến Thắng, No.8 (Hanoi, 4 November 1945) p.1. The editor of this newspaper was Tran Do who became later a general in the people's army of North Viet Nam.
9. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyên Tập (Hanoi: Su That, 1960), p.273.
10. Rf. Quân đội nhân dân (Hanoi, 1962) p.74.
11. See Ho Chi Minh's message on 1 May 1949, Tuyên Tập, pp.305-306.
12. Rf. Chiến Thắng, No.8 (Hanoi, 4 November 1945) p.2.
13. Truong Chinh, Cuộc kháng chiến thần thánh của nhân dân Viet Nam (Hanoi: Su That 1960), Vol II, p.352. *Italics added.*

14. Reproduced in Truong Chinh, Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi, p.7.
15. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyen Tap, p.294.
16. Ho Chi Minh, on the occasion of the commemoration of the Viet Nam Liberation Army's foundation (1947). Rf. Quan doi nhan dan (Hanoi, 1962), pp. 42-43.
17. Truong Chinh, op.cit., pp. 40-41.
18. Ibid., p.47.
19. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, 178.
20. Ho Chi Minh (et al) Bản về Văn hóa và Văn nghệ (Hanoi, 1964), p.16.
21. Truong Chinh, op.cit., p.49.
22. Ibid., p.50.
23. Truong Chinh, "Công tác tư tưởng của Đảng" in Bản về Văn hóa và Văn nghệ, p.125.
24. Truong Chinh, Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi, p.49.
25. Rf. Quan doi nhan dan (Hanoi, 1962), p.122.
26. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, 73.
27. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyen Tap, (Hanoi, 1960), p.386.
28. Truong Chinh, Khang chien .. thang loi, pp.38-39.
29. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, I, 26.
30. Ho Chi Minh, "Message to the army in regions II and III", (24 February 1948). Rf. Q.D.N.D. (Hanoi, 1962), p.45.

31. Ho Chi Minh,, "Message to the conference of Medic Corps" (March 1948) Rf. Q.D.N.D., pp. 48-49.
32. Ho Chi Minh, Appeal on May Day 1949, Tuyen Tap, pp. 305-306. Italics added.
33. See "The ten-point policy of the Viet Minh Government" in chapter III. It may be interesting to observe that for the common people in Viet Nam, number "ten" ordinarily symbolizes a large or a perfect number, conveying the idea of "many" or "universal".
34. Truong Chinh, Khang chien nhat dinh thang loi, pp. 28-29.
35. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyen Tap, p.299.
36. Ibid., p.381.
37. Ibid., p.360.
38. Ibid., p.359.
39. Ho Chi Minh, Rf. Quan Doi Nhan Dan (Hanoi, 1962) pp. 119-120.
40. Rf. Bac Ho Voi nhan dan Hanoi (Hanoi 1970), p.34.
41. Kháng chiến trường kỳ gian khổ nhất định thắng lợi, (study document), 1952, p.35.
42. Mao's interview with Edgar Snow on 16 July 1936, Rf. "On Protracted War", Selected Works, vol.II, p.117. The same slogan became later the title of a pamphlet published by Le Duan (Hanoi, 1965).

Chapter VII

National Resistance, Nation Building, The Party,
and the Theme of HÒA-BÌNH, DÂN-CHỦ
(Peace and Democracy).

In general terms, the Resistance War was declared a just cause which would lead to victory but required great sacrifice and active participation of every citizen in every field and for a long period.

Once those general principles were explained to and explicitly or tacitly accepted by the general public, the following question was raised: "What is to be done?" Any attempt to give a comprehensive answer to this question would necessarily result in failure: a list of all the requirements of a total and long-term war would discourage the people completely.

Communist leaders were shrewd enough to avoid such a psychological disaster. They emphasized instead the national cause of Doc lap, Tu do (Independence and Freedom), the threat of another era of French domination with its untold cruelty and a total loss by the Vietnamese people of all they had achieved thus far. Then, were denounced the colonialist schemes of "divide and rule", of "using the Vietnamese to fight the Vietnamese", of "feeding the war with war", of "enslaving small nations to widen their empire", and of "exploiting our people to enrich a handful of reactionary capitalists"... Only when people had been moved by patriotic explanations and excited by those emotive slogans,

did the persuaders suggest counter-measures to repulse "those barbarous invaders", to retain national Doc lap, Tu do, to "close ranks behind our Democratic Government against the Viet gian (traitors)", to "raise our living standard and our cultural level", to build a new nation on self-reliance, to strengthen solidarity with "democratic and peace-loving peoples" in the world, and "to build new democracy in Viet Nam and peace in the world".

To achieve those fine and desirable goals, a vast programme of action was consistently advocated. But the plans, instructions, and admonitions given in so many fiddrent places, times and forms, may be fairly summarized in or related to the following "ten-point programme" of Kháng Chiến, Kiến Quốc (reistance and nation-building):

- I Maintaining the United Front.
- II Cementing various patriotic organisations.
- III Consolidating the People's Government.
- IV Self-sufficiency.
- V Improving production.
- VI Bettering the people's living conditions.
- VII Raising the people's cultural level.
- VIII Patriotic Emulation.
- IX Political mobilization of the entire people.
- X Mustering international support.

This comprehensive programme provides us with a "proper context and a convenient framework in which to study the way Communist leaders have exhorted the Vietnamese people to implement their ideas and plans. A few quotations suffice to illustrate each point of the

programme, but some complicated guidelines, deemed more important and emphasized by more activities and exhortations from the Communist leaders, are cited and explained more fully.

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I. Maintaining the United Front.

Following the same tactic as the Chinese Communist Party in 1935, Vietnamese Communist leaders decided that in the fight against "French reactionary colonialism" and the "domestic counter-revolutionary forces", the basic tactical task was to maintain a broad national united front.

Applying historical dialectic to the National resistance of Viet Nam, Ho Chi Minh solemnly declared to some hournalists who came to interview him at the beginning of the nation-wide war:

World history and the history of Viet Nam have taught us: Whenever a whole nation rises up resolutely to struggle for its Fatherland, no one and no force whatsoever can defeat it. The Vietnamese only want peace but, for the sake of their Fatherland and their nation, they will fight to the end, pushing the resistance war toward final victory. 1

Time and again, Ho's presidential messages urged the whole nation "to close ranks in the broad united front" and "not to succumb to divisive schemes of

the enemy".² His argument became much more convincing when he cited various historic successes of the Viet nation in the past, including the power seizure of 1945 and several victories scored against the French, using only rudimentary weapons:

The patriotism coupled with the unity of the nation is an immense force which no one can overcome. Thanks to that force, our forefathers have defeated the Yuan and the Ming to safeguard our national sovereignty and freedom. Thanks to that force, our revolution has succeeded in regaining national independence. It is that force which supports our army and our people in their resolute endurance of all kinds of difficulties, hardships, and miseries, and in their determination, completely to eliminate the invaders. It is also that invincible force which helped us to inflict defeat after defeat on our enemy even from the beginning when we were armed only with sticks and rudimentary firearms. ³

To drive home the idea of a powerful united front, Truong Chinh used the "chopstick comparison" which was already familiar to the people and which Vietnamese schoolchildren learned very early from their school reading books:

To continue waging this long resistance war, the whole nation must be united and single-minded. our people can be compared to a bundle of chopsticks. If the

chopsticks are bound together, it is difficult for anybody to break them. But if they are separated, it is easy to break them all, one by one. Likewise our unity is so necessary to our resistance war. 4

The Marxist editor of Su That also hinted at the structure of that united front:

At home, national unity must be maintained; the national united front against the French colonialists and their lackeys must be consolidated and widened. This front must be built on the cornerstone of the worker-peasant alliance and must be led by the working class. 5

That "công - nông (worker-peasant) cornerstone" certainly reminded many a Vietnamese of the Nghe-An (Soviet) in 1930-31 and of the terror which ensued from it. So painful a memory filled the people with anxiety and fear, and gave rise to suspicions of Marxist atheism and objections to co-operating with a possible anti-religious regime, especially among Catholic circles.

An editorial in Su That (No.74, 4 March 1947), the official organ of the Indochinese Association for Marxist Studies, offered a very subtle argument in defence of the Marxists:

On 31 January 1947, D'Argenlieu (the High Commissioner of France in Indochina) declared opposition to the Marxists in Viet Nam. The French reactionaries are fighting

against Viet Nam and yet they have declared war only against the Marxists! This confirms the fact that the enemies of our nation have a great fear of the Marxists who do not fall prey to their deception or their conquest, but are wholly dedicated to the interests of the nation and the fatherland.

This defence was later reiterated by Truong Chinh, with the substitution of "the Viet Minh" for "the Marxists":

The French invaders even declare that they are "fighting the Viet Minh and not Viet Nam". But in reality, they are inflicting damage on the lives and properties of the Vietnamese people without distinction of Viet Minh or non-Viet Minh. They intend to divide the Viet Minh from the people, because to their knowledge, the Viet Minh consists of the most patriotic and determined elements in the country. They are the most faithful to the people's interests ... The French enemies know that they can conquer our people only if they succeed in isolating the Viet Minh and inciting the people to oppose the Viet Minh. 6

The question of "Catholics versus Atheistic Communists" constituted a real stumbling block to the maintenance of the national united front which was a vital tactic of resistance against French forces. The issue was deemed too important to be dismissed easily. So, Truong Chinh reserved more than one page

in his pamphlet on the Resistance War, rhetorically to remove the objection and by insinuation to turn the tables against Catholics:

At present, the French invaders are striving to deceive and divide our people. To sow discord between our Catholic and non-Catholic compatriots, they order their agents to make propaganda among the Catholic patriots that the Viet Minh are Communists, that the Ho Chi Minh Government is a Viet Minh Government and that to follow the Ho Chi Minh Government is to follow the Communists ...

Such misleading propaganda must be torn to pieces. Communism is a doctrine that hides neither its ends nor its means. Sic. But it is not our intention here to explain what Communism is. However, our Catholic compatriots should realise that the Ho Chi Minh Government is a Government of the entire people, already approved by the National Assembly. Likewise, this resistance war is revolutionary war of the entire people led by our Government. It is not a private war concerning only the Communists or the Viet Minh Front. Moreover, the Communists or the Viet Minh Front are persuing the sole aim of gaining freedom and independence for Viet Nam. This resistance will win democratic freedoms for our people, including freedom of belief and freedom of religion. 7

Not content to defend "the Viet Minh Front or the Communists", the ruthless Communist leader Truong Chinh

opposed the imagined objection "Rather lose one's country than one's God" with his doctrinal sermon:

"To love one's country is to serve God". If we love our country and serve God, how can we refrain from fighting the French invaders?

Truong Chinh, then, disposed of other "perfidious schemes" of division between Southerners and Northerners, between minorities and the majority people, between rich and poor ..., by reassuring people of unity and equality throughout the country, by guaranteeing freedom of belief, and by repeating the litany of promised blessings: independence, unification, freedom, happiness, respect for lives and property and improved living standards.

If "art consists of concealing art", the tactic of "national united front for resistance" became a rare piece of Communist art. In 1953, Ho Chi Minh put a higher price on it by jubilantly declaring to his underground "National Assembly" that the maintenance and widening of the National United Front made an essential contribution to the success of the Resistance War. ⁸

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II. Cementing various patriotic organisations.

This plan involved two elements: patriotism and mass organisation. The Communist leaders took the initiative in arousing patriotism, emphasizing

and publicizing patriotic deeds, then setting up mass organisations under patriotic names to perform patriotic duties. The philosophy and the methodology of patriotic organisations were officially explained by the revolutionary master, Ho Chi Minh, to the second national congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party in 1951:

Our people are imbued with a burning patriotism. This is our priceless heritage. Today, as in the past, whenever the Fatherland is invaded, their boiling patriotism overflows into a surging wave that sweeps away all dangers and difficulties, and drowns all traitors and aggressors.

Our history has many great resistance wars which give testimony to our people's patriotism... Our compatriots of today are worthy of their forefathers...

Patriotism is like jewels or other valuables. Sometimes it is clearly visible to the naked eye, being exhibited in a shop window or crystal vases. But there are times when it is discreetly hidden in a trunk or suitcase. Our duty is to try to bring all these hidden precious stones into public display. I mean that every effort must be made to give explanations, publicity, organisation and leadership, so that the patriotism of all of us can find expression in the works benefitting the country and the Resistance War. 9

In addition to the various Cuu quoc (National salvation) associations related to the Viet Minh Front,

new clubs or guilds, plans or campaigns were organised to attract more contributions to the Resistance War: Hội Mẹ Chiến sĩ (Association of sponsoring mothers for combatants), Hội Bảo trợ thương binh (Aid for wounded soldiers), Hội Bảo vệ Hòa bình (League for the Defence of Peace), Mùa đông binh sĩ (Winter Help for Soldiers), Hũ gạo nuôi quân (Rice jar for Soldiers), and so forth. Đảng Dân Chủ (Democratic Party) and Đảng Xã hội (Socialist Party), the two political parties formed at the instigation of the Viet Minh Front to be its allies and protégés, were also regarded as "patriotic organisations of the people" since they wholeheartedly co-operated with the Government of Resistance.

Since 1942 Ho Chi Minh had appealed for more adherents to the Viet Minh associations, and in his message through "the Moon Goddess", emphasized people's organisations as the indispensable means to gain freedom and to lead revolution to success:

Yêu nhau xin nhớ lời nhau:
Việt Minh hội ấy mau mau tìm vào.

.....
Muốn biết, tự do chầy hoặc chóng
Thì xem tổ chức khắp hay không.

.....
Tổ chức, tuyên truyền càng rộng rãi,¹⁰
Tức là cách mạng chóng thành công.

If you love me, please, remember my word:
Join the Viet Minh as soon as you can.

.....
To know when Liberation will come,
See how widespread are people's organisations.

.....

The better organisation and propaganda,
The sooner the revoltuion will succeed.

but in 1946, when its Communist leanings were detected, people hesitated to join the activities of the Viet Minh Front. The Viet Minh Government then proposed a broader organisation, Hoi Lien hiep Quoc dan Viet Nam (the Viet Nam United Association) or Lien Viet, in its abbreviated form, to comprise all associations, groups and political parties in Viet Nam. As well as the Viet Minh or Communist officers (Ho Chi Minh: honorary president; Tôn Đức Thắng: Vice president; Cu Huy Cận: secretary general; Trần Huy Liệu: Phạm Ngọc Thạch), other men, known not to be Communists, were appointed to office to convey an impression of broad nationalism: Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, officially a non-party patriot, Home Minister in the Ho Chi Minh Government; Ngô Tử Hạ, a pro-Viet-Minh Catholic; and Nguyễn Tường Long, a "cooperative" Nationalist. This Lien Viet was officially declared a "non-partisan united front", formed to push forward the national resistance to gain "independence and democracy".

However, the real aim and nature of the Lien Viet wererrevealed by President Ho on 20 April 1948, in his letter to the Congress of the national Committee of the Viet Minh League:

In the period when it became necessary to further-develop the unity of the whole people, the Viet Minh proposed the timely formation of the Viet Nam United Association (Lien Viet) and

assisted its rapid and extensive growth. By so doing, the Viet Minh was itself further developed and consolidated. 11

When the Indochinese Communist Party decided to re-emerge under the new name of Viet Nam Workers' Party (Đảng Lao Động), at "the public appearance ceremony" on 3 March 1951, Ho Chi Minh officially introduced the Party as follows:

The goal of the Viet Nam Workers' Party may be summarized as follows: To unite the entire people and serve the Fatherland.

The task of the Viet Nam Workers' Party is resolutely to lead the entire people: To bring the resistance war to victory and the national rehabilitation to success.

The policy of the Viet Nam Workers' Party ... can be expressed in a few words: To make our Viet Nam independent, unified, democratic, prosperous and strong. 12

This is an attractive and persuasive summary of a typical official manifesto written by the Communists. But the true face of the "new party" was described more accurately only to the members of the Party in February 1951, by the same old revolutionary leader:

As regards its composition, the Viet Nam Workers' Party will admit the most enthusiastic and most enlightened workers, peasants and intellectuals.

As regards theory, it adheres to Marxism-Leninism As regards its immediate goal, the Viet Nam Workers' Party unites and leads the entire people to wage the Resistance war to complete victory, to win back national unity and complete independence, it leads the entire people to implement new democracy, and to create conditions for the advance to socialism.

...At the present stage, the interests of the working class and other working people, and of the nation, are one. It is precisely because it is the Party of the working class and working people that the Viet Nam Workers' Party must be the Party of the Vietnamese people

.....
We have a great and powerful Party. It is great and powerful thanks to Marxism - Leninism....

We have the most clear-sighted and worthy elder brothers and friends of mankind - comrade Stalin and comrade Mao Tse-tung. 13

It is most interesting to observe those "patriotic organisations" being used as stepping stones leading to the "great and powerful Party" based on Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. From the writings of Ho Chi Minh it is learned that "the more the Viet Minh Front developed the more the (Communist) Party grew",¹⁴ and that "the Viet Minh was further developed and consolidated" by the rapid growth of the Lien Viet.¹⁵ When the Lao Dong Party made its public appearance in the Unification

Congress Viet Minh - Lien Viet, Ho Chi Minh appreciatively told those "non-party" representatives at the meeting:

You have welcomed the report by comrade Truong Chinh on the founding of the Viet Nam Workers' Party. You are the representatives of the National United Front, that is of the entire people. Your opinion is that of the entire people, therefore, as you have welcomed and esteemed the Viet Nam Workers' Party, we are confident that the entire people will also favour it. 16

This explains the importance attached to "patriotic organisations of the people", the immense interests, and the tireless efforts on the part of the Communist leaders, in creating and activating those popular fronts and people's committees.

Yet, officially those patriotic associations were said to help the Vietnamese nation in fighting colonialist invaders and defending "independence and democracy". Truong Chinh, for instance, asserted in the beginning of the Resistance War, that patriotic organisations were indispensable for the success of the total war:

The mobilization of the whole nation is not a special task reserved for the Government, but rather a common task for the political parties and the people's organisations. There fore, to have a systematic, strong, deep and wide mobilization from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top, efforts should be made to organise the people into patriotic associations

and democratic political parties. The growth of the people's organisations is a guarantee for the great success of the total mobilization...

On the contrary, if the organization of the people is neglected, it is impossible to mobilize the whole people to support the Government and the army, and impossible to make the whole people participate in the war of total resistance. 17

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III. Consolidating the People's Government.

When various patriotic organisations were well co-ordinated and the National United Front emerged as a monolithic bloc, the Communist leaders endeavoured to further the consolidation of the People's Government. The term People (Nhân dân) became increasingly restricted to the nation's core which was "the alliance of the workers and peasants under the leadership of the working class".

Since the country was at war and national power was already in the hands of the Communist leaders, it was expedient to appeal to the nation to intensify the resistance war while the Communist leaders strove to strengthen "the machinery of resistance" i.e., the People's Government. This blending of "Party tasks" with "nation-tasks" had been announced by Truong Chinh in Su That and in his pamphlet "The Resistance will win":

The task of the resistance in the political field is very heavy. Its fulfilment requires the consolidating of the democratic republican State, the strengthening of the machinery of resistance, and the unifying of all military, administrative, and popular organisations in the whole country.... 18

Another way of unifying all organisations, activities and powers, under the same "leading machinery of the people's resistance" was also prescribed by the same spokesman of the Indochinese Communist Party:

On the other hand, all traitors, wreckers, opportunists, cowards, bureaucrats, as well as militarists and factionalist elements must be purged from the machinery of resistance, counter revolutionaries must be suppressed, the seeds of division and disruption among the people should be destroyed, and the political rear consolidated by all means. 19

Thus, all opponents and those who did not enthusiastically embrace the policies of the Government were crushed on the grounds that they were "national traitors", and this was "a task to be undertaken simultaneously" with the resistance war against the enemy. 20

That double task was to be carried out in a shrewd manner as Ho Chi Minh had advised his delegation to the Dalat Conference (April 1946): "there is a need for someone to strike and someone else to carress". Leaving the unpleasant duty of striking "national traitors"

to his lieutenants and the Công-an (security office), President Ho continued his persuasive appeals consistently with the respectable and benign figure of the "Elderly Uncle". Until December 1950, Ho's presidential messages were still carefully worded so as to avoid any mention of the Communist Party, Marxism or of any cruel, ruthless policy on the part of the Government. His kindliness in manner and mildness in words were surpassed only by the extreme caution in depicting his attitude toward the enemy and the persuasiveness of his appeals for unity and co-operation with "a determined Government which upheld a just cause":

...After four years of nation-wide Resistance we have moved from a passive to an active position, from a weak to a progressively stronger status, from the defensive to the offensive.

These successes resulted from the heroism of our army, the enthusiasm of our people, the determination of our Government, and from the just cause of our struggle.

...But do not be conceited over your successes nor underestimate your enemy...

...Members of the army of mass organisations, and of the administration must emulate in practising industriousness, thriftiness, integrity and justice...

Our army, people, and government officials must unite and be of one mind, and closely co-operate with one another. 21

But after the Communist victory in China and the establishment of its official relations with Peking and Moscow, the Government of Ho Chi Minh took a new turn in policy. A triumphal note pervaded Ho's presidential message:

At the beginning of last year, we won a great political victory, the recognition of our Government by the Soviet Union, China and other people's democracies, which led to the great victory at the Border and in the Midland.

At the beginning of this year, we won a new great political victory, the founding of the Viet Nam Workers' Party and the Viet Minh - Lien Viet unification: with this trend, we will score greater military victories. 22

It was Mao Tse-tung's victory in establishing the People's Republic of China that encouraged Ho's Government in its expectation of victory over the French and served as a decisive element in the re-emergence of the Indochinese Communist Party even though the resistance war was not yet over. In fact, the tactical re-emergence of the Communist Party under the ambiguous name of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, and its identification with "the leading machinery of national resistance" were planned to gain credit and prestige for the Party in the national victory over the French, thus placing beyond dispute the political power which was already in Communist hands. This subtle plan of operations was presented by Ho Chi Minh to the Second Congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party in a very

delicate manner:

...We must have a legal party appropriate to the situation in the world and at home in order to lead our people's struggle to victory. This party is the Viet Nam Workers' Party.

.....
The Viet Nam Workers' Party must be a great, powerful, steady, pure and thoroughly revolutionary Party.

The Viet Nam Workers' Party must be the clear-sighted, determined, and loyal leader of the labouring class and other workers of the Vietnamese people, to unite and lead the people in carrying the armed resistance to complete victory so as to achieve new democracy. 23

Once the "new party" was given the leading role in the "national patriotic war", the consolidation of the national government became the consolidation of the Workers' Party. This process required the skillful combination of the two previous policies, namely the maintenance of the United Front, and the cementing together of various patriotic organisations. A typical sample of Ho's art of persuasion in his political manoeuvres to consolidate his "Government of new democracy" can be culled from his letter to the Second national congress of peasants for national salvation:

Most of our people are peasants,
All enterprises must rely on
peasants. Should the peasants
be awakened and actively participate,
the resistance will win
and the rehabilitation be com-

pleted, all the sooner and only then can the peasants be liberated. The Peasants' Association for National Salvation must be a broad and well organised one, enrolling youth of both sexes in the countryside to make the Association larger, stronger, and more active. At the same time, we must educate its members by everyday practice to turn the Peasants' Association into a powerful force to implement all the policies of the Government and the National United Front. 24

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IV. Self-sufficiency.

Learning from the Chinese experience of economic problems in the late 1920's and Mao Tse-tung's speech on the importance of economic work during the revolutionary war (the speech was delivered in southern Kiangsi in August 1933), Ho Chi Minh ceaselessly advised his followers always to strive for economic self-sufficiency throughout the resistance war. At the conference of military supply in 1951, Ho applying the "logic of resistance war", listed self-sufficiency as a condition of victory for the long resistance:

You well understand that the resistance will certainly win, but victory will only come after a long enduring resistance. How, a necessary requirement of our long resistance war is self-sufficiency. 25

At the conference on guerilla warfare in July 1952, President Ho emphasized again the principle of self-sufficiency against excessive reliance on foreign aid:

The help from our brotherly countries is certainly important. But we must not remain inactive to wait for help nor excessively rely on other peoples. A nation which relies on other nations' help, without practising self-supply,²⁶ does not deserve its independence.

In the same vein, General Nguyen Chi Thanh took pains to remove the apparent incompatibility between self-sufficiency and foreign aid, when he addressed the Army Conference on Propaganda and Training in August 1951:

We benefit from the aid of our brotherly countries but we must always keep in mind that our revolution is our own work and it consists of practising self-sufficiency while braving all difficulties to grasp victory with our own hands. Some of us may have said that "self-sufficiency will exclude foreign aid and foreign aid would dispense with the need for self-sufficiency". Both are cases of extremist thinking: the first assertion is an expression of stubborn isolationism and the second one, of incredible laziness. Those muddled heads do not understand that self-sufficiency and international aid are complementary. 27

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V. Improving production.

In order to practice self-sufficiency, every citizen must not spare any effort in trying to raise production rates. This was an often repeated message from the Resistance Government.

On May Day 1948, President Ho urged the labouring people to increase production and, at the same time, to disrupt the economy of those areas occupied by the enemy:

Our labouring compatriots throughout the country must strive to be exemplars in improving production in every field.

Our fellow workers in the enemy occupied areas must strive to paralyze the enemy's economy.

Compatriots on this side should vie with one another in economic construction whereas compatriots on the other side do in economic destruction, and both sides should compete with one another in setting high records.

In this way, workers in both the free and the occupied areas, are participating in the resistance war and in the patriotic emulation, and are rendering service, therefore, to our fatherland. This constitutes a step forward for the victory of our resistance war, the unification and independence of our country, and the liberation of all our working compatriots. 28

Since Viet Nam was mostly an agricultural country, production during the resistance war consisted almost exclusively in the cultivation of land. The Government, therefore, decided to exploit all the capabilities of the peasants by an emulation program in agriculture. Naturally, the resistance war was appealed to so as to endow this campaign with a sense of patriotism and urgency. In February 1951, President Ho also applied his "logic of chain reaction" to promote this campaign among peasants:

Since the inauguration of the "all people cultivate" movement,,everybody has been making great efforts to compete with others in the cultivation of land. Thanks to the movement, last year even though our country had to suffer natural calamities (flood and drought) and much destruction from the enemy, there was sufficient food for our people and our army which scored great success.

This year since the resistance war is achieving far greater progress, we have to strive for more abundant food.

To win more victories, our soldiers and our people must eat their fill, which requires an abundance of food. But to produce more food, we must cultivate more and work hard in manuring and weeding.

"Abundant food produces a strong army". As the fighters at the front emulate in killing enemies and scoring exploits, our compatriots in the rear must emulate in improving production.

The ricefields are battlefields
 Ploughs and hoes are weapons
 The peasants are fighters,
 The rear competes with the front. 29

To set a good example to the people, Uncle Ho joined the peasants in pushing the plough through muddy ricefields and planting young trees in some remote villages. The propaganda service did not miss the opportunities to take and publish pictures of "the Uncle cultivating land". 30

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VI. Bettering the people's Living Conditions.

From the early days of the Viet Minh Front, the betterment of people's living conditions was promised. The ten-point domestic program of the Viet Minh Government publicized in August 1945 presented more detailed promises, instilling high hopes into every Vietnamese and every grouping.

In October 1945, not long after the power seizure, the revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh gave evidence of his enterprise in issuing to the people's executive committees at all levels a special message emphasizing their duty of "serving the people's interest" in order to "win the people's confidence":

Our Government has promised the people that it will do its best so that every citizen may enjoy his share of happiness. In the building of our country, the things to be restored will have

to be restored slowly... But from the very beginning, we must correctly follow our guiding principles.

... We must exert ourselves to do whatever is of benefit to the people.

We must love them so that they may love and respect us. 31

This particular concern about the welfare of the people was apparent in Ho's appeals to fight famine in 1945, to fight flood in June 1947, to increase production from 1947 onwards, and so forth. ³² It was officially stated as a Government policy on 1 January 1946, and compassionately expressed in Ho's letter to evacuated compatriots in February 1947:

The Government and I worry for the welfare of our compatriots every minute. We live amid hardships now, but we willingly endure them together. When our resistance is victorious, our independence achieved, we will enjoy happiness together. 33

On 2 September 1947, however, while the Vietnamese people were enduring the hardships of the war, President Ho already reported in glossy terms the Government's achievements in the economic field:

Together with the people, the Government has repaired the dikes, increased production, abolished poll-tax, decreased other taxes, saved people from starvation, and improved the people's living standard. 34

Some three months later (19 December 1947) Ho made a revealing statement about the spirit of "sharing" and "belonging" of the Resistance Government:

Our Government has gained more prestige and support because it is a Government determined to wage the Resistance war, a Government of broad national unity which shares its subjects' misfortunes, a Government belonging to the people. 35

This subtle blending of national government with the Communist Party which remained partially hidden behind the façade of a national united front, was also to be found in a cleverly contrived land reform.

Even though a radical agrarian revolution had always been a crucially important item of the Communist agenda, the Central Committee of the Party decided, in 1945 to replace the slogan of agrarian revolution with the slogan of "reduction of land rents and interest rates", so as to maintain intact a broad united front for the democratic bourgeois revolution and the power-seizure.

Likewise, during the resistance war, the Communist leaders preferred to carry out partial land reforms, step by step, in order not to alienate some potentially troublesome segments of the population, such as the landowners, the bourgeois, and the religious groups. They also found it politic not to proclaim land reform as a major policy of the Government from the beginning. It was touched upon as a humanitarian measure to alleviate the suffering of the poor peasants,

under the unchallengeable policy of "improving the people's living conditions".

Subsequently, the Party Central Committee methodically reaffirmed, in January 1948, the "anti-feudal task" alongside the "anti-imperialist task" of the revolution. It prescribed, however a gradual, cautious, and flexible implementation of land reform, as stipulated in the Central Committee's instructions:

"Gradually to limit, by reforms, the exploitation by feudal landowners (for instance, by reducing land rents), at the same time, to bring about changes in the system of land ownership (as far as this measure does not harm the anti-colonialist National United Front). 36

The concrete measures for implementing the agrarian policy decided by the Party in 1948, the Government decrees in July 1949, February 1950, March 1952, concerning the reduction of land rents, the temporary confiscation and distribution of land, the rise of Communal lands, the system of agricultural taxes, promulgated in 1951, and the five drives of land reform from 1953 to 1956 were all put forward as contributions to the improvement of the peasants' standard of living, to the national increase of production, and also to the success of ~~the~~ national Resistance.

This tactic was embodied in the new formulation of the Communist Party's "thesis on the agrarian question" issued in November 1953:

In order to improve the living conditions of the peasants and to mobilize

all the material and human resources so as to carry on the long-term Resistance, defeat the French Imperialists and American Interventionists overthrow the puppet administration and completely liberate the country, and in order to liberate the productive forces in the countryside, intensify agricultural production and pave the way for developments of industry and trade, which is necessary for carrying on the Resistance and rebuilding the country in the future, it is necessary to abolish the systems of colonial land ownership in Viet Nam, abolish the system of feudal land ownership, and bring into being the system of land ownership by the peasants, the land being given to those who work on it. 37

It was understood (and confirmed by later publications) that a radical land reform had "no other aim than the total overthrow of the oldest ruling class", and that there existed "no way to break the feudalists' reaction other than the use of violence". Persuasion was deemed ineffective, partial and gradual reforms insufficient. To reinforce the "revolutionary violence" which had been applied through the administrative measures decreed by the "people's revolutionary power", i.e., the Resistance Government, the Communist Party decided to use "the force of the revolutionary masses" by an "all-out mobilisation of the peasant masses" for carrying out land reform.

However, the Vietnamese peasants were deeply rooted in their traditions, including the Confucian traditions of Kindness, Faithfulness, Courtesy, Reasonableness

(Nhân, Nghĩa, Lễ, Trí), and the Taoist traditions of Respect for and Harmony with Nature. It was small wonder that generally they were easily satisfied with the basic necessities of life and normally shrank from the prospect of violent struggle. Even though land reforms were officially declared, time and again, "a means of improving the people's living conditions", peasants were reluctant to join class struggle and to overthrow social order. The Communist authorities decided, then to sweep away those traditions of "obscurantism", to awaken the peasants to their own interests, to organise, and to lead them to the struggle according to the Party's policy of agrarian revolution. This rationale of the all-out mobilisation was formulated by Tran Phuong in a Hanoi publication:

The Vietnamese peasants are ardent revolutionaries [sic]. However, as the national struggle was always on the foreground and the peasant struggles did not have the appearance of a class struggle, their class consciousness was obscured... The peasants were often under the influence of landowners, especially of those with whom they had ties of kinship or religion; others were prisoners of the feudal ideology, of superstitious or defeatist ideas, and believed that "people are born rich or poor".... To engage them in the anti-feudal struggle, it was therefore necessary to free them from all those chains, to instill class consciousness into them, to awaken them to their class interests, to the necessity of opposing the feudalists, to make them aware of the matchless strength of their

class and the worker-peasant alliance, in a word, it was necessary to awaken their consciousness and then to organize and lead them to the struggle in a systematic way and according to the working class political line.... 38

Such an operation was euphemistically termed "liberation of the peasants" or "democracy for the peasants" and was essentially related to "national liberation" and "democracy for the people". Thus, the peasant question was prompted as a national question, class struggle cunningly combined with national struggle, and the Party's interests with the people's interests. It is no longer a secret that this kind of clever combination was "the key to success" in land reform, "a success of strategic significance". 39

It was President Ho who outlined the plan of operation to the Labor Party in February 1951:

Concerning land policy, in the free zones we must strictly carry out reduction of land rent and interest rates, confiscation of lands... to temporarily distribute them to the poor peasants and the families of a soldiers, with a view to improving the living conditions of the peasants, heightening their spirit, and fostering their force for the Resistance War. 40

After nearly three years of implementation of land reform under the watchful eyes of the Government, it was also Ho Chi Minh, the founder and supreme leader of the Indochinese Communist Party, who expounded the significance of land reform in more revealing terms.

The key to the victory of the Resistance lies in the consolidation and broadening of the National United Front, in the strengthening of the worker-peasant alliance and the people's power; in the strengthening and development of the Army, in the consolidation of the Party and the intensification of its leadership in all fields. Only a mobilization of the masses for the purpose of land reform enables us to fulfill those tasks with success.⁴¹

.....
In the political field, the political and economic power in the countryside will be in the hands of the peasants, the people's democratic dictatorship will be carried out genuinely... 42

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VII. Raising the people's cultural level.

This programme was applied in three main fields: popular education, general education and cultural activities.

1. The first field, popular education (Bình dân học vụ), consisted of helping the illiterates to learn reading and writing, then to receive complementary education (Bổ túc bình dân). This kind of activity was declared as going justice to the poor peasants who were for a long time victims of colonialist-feudal oppression and exploitation. Predictably, it was met with a great enthusiasm and produced concrete results which were found as attractive as the declared purposes

of the program itself: thousands of Vietnamese peasants being able to read and to write for the first time, proudly shed the ignominious label of mù chữ (literally letter-blind, or illiterate).

The anti-illiteracy campaign had far greater effects by virtue of the fact that it opened new horizons and conditioned the peasants to adopt new attitudes, new practices contrary to their old traditions of ethics and socio-politics. At this conjunction, complimentary education was introduced to whet their appetite for learning and accepting new ideas and new roles, as they had been thrilled by their ability to read slogans and public notices in their villages. Moreover in the prospect of other potential abilities, they were promised of a prominent role in the continuing revolution, with more economic and political powers.

From the very beginning of the campaign against illiteracy, the peasants were given strong motivation by an inspiring appeal of President Ho (8 September 1945) wherein national struggle and future happiness were emphasized:

Formerly, during the period of their domination, the French colonialists applied a policy of obscurantism. They limited the number of schools, wishing to keep our people illiterate the more easily to deceive and to exploit us.

...Now as we have won our independence, one of the most urgent tasks to be accomplished at present is to raise the people's cultural level.

...If you want to maintain independence, if you want to make our people strong and our nation prosperous, ever Vietnamese must know his rights and duties, enrich himself with new knowledge in order to be in a position to participate in the building of our country, but first of all he must know how to read and write the national script. 43

A sequel written by Nguyen Khanh Toàn, the party member who really directed the Ministry of Education (though the non-party Nguyen Van Huyên bore the official title of Minister) proved to be more explanatory:

The anti-illiteracy movement is of great importance in a country like ours. But it aims higher than the eradication of illiteracy itself. By wiping out illiteracy, it helps improve the cultural level of our people, without which national reconstruction would be impossible. 44

.....
First of all, this mass of illiterate people had to know how to write and read. Once that power was in their hands, they would become the masters of their lives. For them, education was a necessary means to raise the level of political consciousness enhance their ardent patriotism and increase their revolutionary activities, help them take a real part in the management of public affairs, consolidate independence and accomplish national renovation. 45

Throughout the period of resistance war, "each anti-illiteracy class", said President Ho, "must become a centre of propaganda for the patriotic war". However

it did not stop there. Since "the fight against illiteracy was first of all a political work", it was strictly designed to serve the revolution according to its successive stages. ⁴⁶

2. General education: Early in 1947, after leaving Hanoi for the jungle to wage the resistance war, the Ministry of Education received precise instructions from the resourceful revolutionary leader, Ho Chi Minh, concerning the reform of education.

The first stage of reform (1947-49), termed Rèn cán Chính cỡ (Training cadres and readjusting organisations), consisted of laying foundations for strict organisation and control in schools.

The second stage, Học tập dân chủ (Democratic Study), (1950-51), trained teachers in the educational methods of "new democracy" and recast the curricula of education with a "national and democratic content", emphasizing patriotism, spirit of independence, national solidarity, hatred against feudal oppression and colonialist aggression, love for collective labour and labouring people... The third stage (1952-54) was a radical transformation, called Cải tạo tư tưởng (thought reform), whereby "educational workers" were expected to be completely remoulded in "the ideology of the working class". Such a new educational system, "popular and democratic", was given three clearly-defined duties: To mould the young renerations according to the new, progressive ideology of the "democratic camp headed by

the Great U.S.S.R."; To improve the cultural standard of the working people and to achieve a gradual cultural revolution; To train cadres "to serve the Revolution and revolutionary people".

Since education was considered a battle-front during the Resistance War, various slogans in schools pointed to the close relationship between school and life, study and resistance, education and revolution:

To study is to wage resistance
against aggression.
To combine theory with practice,
To study well, is to serve the
people.
To relate knowledge to real life.
Every class should be a propaganda
centre for the resistance.

The road on which education had embarked was praised as the "right path" and described in flowery terms:

Born amidst the fire of decisive
struggles, Vietnamese education
has taken the right path: it is
truly national and genuinely demo-
cratic. An offspring of the
Revolution, it must serve first of
all the Revolution and the revolu-
tionary people. 47

Obviously, during the Resistance War, the political revolution continued in every single field, including the field of education which was called "a powerful tool of revolution". The report on fifteen years of education in North Viet Nam, published under the name of Nguyen Van Huyên, described that constant and firm

revolution under the leadership of the Party, as having two principal aspects:

That educational revolution was achieved under the guiding principle that education must serve politics or, to be more specific, the resistance war and production. In order to purge the schools of all remnants of imperialism, a timely implemented resolution was the reform of old teachers and the formation of new teachers, constituting a corps of engineers of mind, armed with the ideas of nation and people's democracy... Such revolutionary education came to terms with the interests of the masses, and hence was wholeheartedly supported by the masses who in turn contributed materials, work and experience to foster the constant growth of education. 48

The important role of the teachers was readily acknowledged by the Party and the Government:

Teachers are brain workers, entrusted with the duty of educating and forming young men and children to become socialist workers, ready to defend the Fatherland, eager to co-operate in the building of a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic and prosperous Viet Nam. Teachers are constantly fortified in politics, professional training, and culture with a view to fulfilling the above mentioned duty improving the quality of their work, and making continuous progress in their profession. 49

In order to arouse the enthusiasm of teachers and to encourage them to participate, together with students and parents, in the political and social activities in their localities, the cadres of the Party and the State endeavoured to implement the "policy towards teachers" which consisted of "respecting teachers, improving their system of work, raising their living standard", and so forth. But at the same time teachers were required to take part in study sessions, local meetings, and national congresses, for the purpose of purifying and transforming themselves into "new men", "new workers". A mild reminder for teachers came from President Ho Chi Minh, in his message to the 1951 National Educational Congress:

At this Congress you must review in detail the reform of our educational programme and its method of application in order to correct your mistakes and develop your good points. See to it that education is related to our people's life, to our Resistance War and nation-building. Endeavour, therefore, to co-ordinate schooling with the common work of political propaganda and education of the people. 50

Realizing the difficulty of transforming old teachers with bourgeois backgrounds, the Government and the Party officials concentrated their efforts on forming a new generation of students according to the party line.

To serve the Resistance War and the revolutionary people, students had to divide their day into two halves:

half a day was devoted to study and the other half to production and defence work.

In 1951, students in secondary schools were trained and encouraged to give periodic evaluation of their teachers based on the criteria of "teaching content, teaching method, and political standpoint".

In the following years, strictly organised and entrusted with a measure of political power, students formed people's courts to pass sentence on "reactionary elements", either teachers or students. The tumultuous trial of Đinh Thúc, a sixth former at Đậu Quang Lĩnh Secondary School, was an outstanding example of what was happening everywhere.

Only much later (1965) was a comprehensive explanation given in an official publication entitled Education in the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (pp.10-11):

Events of the national liberation war had a profound impact on school education. In 1953, when the peasant masses were mobilized for land reform, education received a new impetus. The national anti-imperialist struggle combined with the anti-feudal fight gave teachers and pupils the opportunity to steel themselves in a fierce and complex class struggle. The years of Resistance regenerated the content and methods of education. Marxism-Leninism became the official doctrine which breathed dynamism into the whole of our education system while ensuring for it a scientific character. War had by no means paralyzed our efforts in the field of education; when peace

returned, we were ready for new progress i.e. Socialism .

Since the final purpose and duty of education is "to form fully developed men, those workers who are to build Socialism",⁵¹ the efforts in the educational field had been aiming at:

An education which will materialize the teaching of President Ho, namely that "intellectuals should be transformed into peasant-workers, and peasant-workers into intellectuals" thus creating a large troop of new intellectuals, new workers who will be ardently patriotic and faithful to socialism. 52

3. The third part in the programme of "raising the people's cultural level" consists of cultural activities and cultural workers.

The first important document promoting the "New Culture of Vietnam" was the proclamation of the Cultural Thesis, signed by Truong Chinh in 1943. It pointed to various weaknesses of the contemporary culture in Viet Nam (feudal influence from France, fascist influence from Japan, separation between theory and practice, "superstition, hope in God or Buddha", "wrong tendencies of art for art's sake, of super-realism", divorce from the masses ...), criticized the then famous cultural groups of Tri Tân, Thanh Nghi, mercilessly attacked the Hàn Thuyên group (of Trotskyite tendency), and raised three attractive guiding principles in slogan form: Dân tộc, Khoa học, Đại chúng (National, Scientific, Popular). This whole document was a close adaptation of Mao Tse-tung's "The culture

of New Democracy"⁵³ which was completely unknown in Viet Nam. It made a deep impression on some professors, students, and writers, such as Đặng Thai Mai, Hoàng Minh Giám, Nguyễn Đình Thi, Nguyễn Hồng, Nam Cao..., and thus succeeded in propagating revolutionary and Marxist ideas through "culture" and "democracy" as Truong Chinh has written in the conclusion:

The movement of a new culture for the Vietnamese nation is an integral part of the general movement promoting the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution of the Vietnamese people in this period. It is inseparable from the movement of national salvation and liberation of the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party. 54

Those ideas were later developed in a paper delivered by Truong Chinh at the second national congress of culture (July 1948) and published as a pamphlet the following year. ⁵⁵ This paper asserted that the working class was the most revolutionary class and that its interests coincided with the interests of the Vietnamese nation, and it invited all "Vietnamese cultural combatants" to join the "national united front for independence and unification" headed by the workers who had been the voluntary pioneers.

Anticipating the excuse of those intellectuals who were enthusiastic about fighting colonialism as nationalists but not as Marxists (men such as Trần Trọng Kim, Nguyễn Văn Sâm, Nguyễn Văn Luyện, Hoàng Xuân Hãn...), Truong Chinh resorted to sophistry, which is known among Vietnamese as "a smoke bomb in argumentation":

Can we struggle for our nation simply on a nationalist standpoint? No. Our country is a country of democracy, and furthermore, of new democracy. It is not a false democracy in which a small minority practices oppression and exploitation against the great majority. It is rather a people's democracy wherein the people (i.e., the majority) get the upper hand over a number of foreign invaders and Viet traitors (i.e., the minority). We cannot struggle only for the country and nation, while standing against democracy...

The cultural combatants of our country, just as the progressive cultural combatants throughout the world, being faithful to the Fatherland, will naturally join, and must join, the ranks of the new democracy's forces in the world, to fight against all imperialist and colonialist forces. 56

Later, after introducing the materialist and the historical dialectics of Marx as the most effective way to serve the people, the nation and mankind, Truong Chinh proposed "the most revolutionary cultural stand" as based:

Socially on the working class and the labouring people;
Politically on new democracy and scientific socialism;
Ideologically on dialectical materialism and historical materialism;
and on socialist realism for literary and artistic creation. 57

In the last analysis, the three principal characters of the "National, Scientific, and Mass culture" were interpreted as positively to acquiesce in accepting the new democratic leaders of the "national United Front", to accept "scientific Marxism" as the compass of life, wholeheartedly to love and to serve "the people" i.e., the worker-peasant-soldier bloc.

"This was", asserted Truong Chinh, "the right attitude and the secret of success for us, cultural combatants". 58

Answering those who would like to specialize in cultural activities without embroiling themselves in partisan politics, Truong Chinh vehemently argued with the authoritarian tone of a political dialectician:

Propaganda is also a kind of art. The art of propaganda is an integral part of art in general. Conversely, every work of art has more or less propagandist effect... Propaganda, when it reaches a certain level, becomes art. On the other hand, when art is realist to a certain degree, it becomes clearly propagandist. It is possible therefore, that certain propagandists are not, or not yet, artists; however, it is impossible to have artists who are entirely non-propagandists. 59

To those who maintained that art must be concerned with truth whereas propaganda would not be always truthful, Truong Chinh opposed a dialectic retort:

The art which serves a just cause is truthful. The art serving an unjust cause is untrue or not really art at all. So likewise there are two kinds of propaganda: the propaganda of the invading or reactionary side is untruthful whereas the propaganda of the party which upholds a just cause is clearly truthful. 60

In the same vein, President Ho's letter to the cultural workers and intellectuals of Nam Bo on 25 May 1947, reminded them that "their pens could serve as sharp weapons in their struggle to uphold the good against the evil".

To sharpen their weapons and to tighten the association of artists and cultural workers, the Government organised the second national conference for culture in July 1948, an exhibition of paintings in December 1951, and so forth. On no occasion did President Ho neglect to send them a message urging upon them stronger links with the broad masses, and advocating a "solid political stand" and a "correct ideology".

After a few years of resistance war under the leadership of the "vanguard class", and of submission to the art of propaganda which constituted a part of the "culture of New Democracy", it was practical for every Vietnamese in the "liberated zones" to accept the official teaching that "culture must serve politics". There was practically no possible distinction between culture and ideology, new education and thought-reform, democratic study and Party training. It was, then,

perfectly expedient to organise discussion groups, study weeks, training sessions, and ideological remoulding courses for the purpose of "raising the people's cultural level" or "further advancing towards final victory".

Most outstanding and typical for specific groupings were the three ideological remoulding courses organised:

- a). For Party members and cadres in May 1952;
- b). For office workers in June 1952;
- c). For brain workers in July-September 1952.

a). To the Party cadres, Ho Chi Minh, the father and the supreme leader of the Party, confided in an atmosphere of secrecy the real purpose of the whole "cultural programme" and the full significance of the "training course":

The aim of the ideological remoulding of the Party is to raise the ideological and political level of the Party cadres and members to enable them to act in accordance with the proletarian viewpoint and standpoint.

If the Party ideological remoulding campaign is successfully carried out, it will develop our success in the military, political and economic fields.

It is through this campaign that the Party tempers, readjusts and strengthens its ranks to keep up the long Resistance War until victory...

When this course is ended, you must compete with one another to help

the Central Committee carry out the ideological remoulding of the whole Party and the whole army, and improve your work among the broad masses. 61

b). To the office workers, i.e., administrative officials who were not necessarily Party members, Ho was at pains to explain in non-communist terms the "Why" and the "How" of the remoulding courses:

Why must we remould our ideology?

It is because many cadres do not have a firm political stand nor a clear ideology. This is the cause of their many shortcomings:

- They have not yet implemented the national democratic revolutionary line, not firmly grasped the policy of long-term resistance, self-sufficiency and self-supply;
- They have caught many diseases: individualism, concern for personal and family interests,... waste, corruption, bureaucracy, commandism, and so forth.

How must ideological remoulding be conducted?

Ideological remoulding aims at raising the cadres' revolutionary ideology, strengthening their political stand, cleansing them of their mistakes, and developing their good points. To achieve this, we must:

- Broaden democracy, apply sincere self-criticism and frank criticism;
- Repress the reserved and subservient attitude of lower levels towards higher levels, of the workers and peasants towards the

intellectuals, and between the cadres within and without the Party.

After asking the cadres in charge (high Party officials) frankly to guide the courses, and the participants resolutely "to study and transform themselves", Ho voiced his wish for more efficiency in their future "glorious" missions:

You are the cadres who have taken part in the Resistance and in the Revolution, you have many opportunities to make progress and to enjoy a glorious future. I hope that you will do your utmost to study in order to advance steadily, to serve the resistance and the people with all your hearts and souls, and to fulfil your task, especially the task of promoting the masses to carry out land reform so as to become exemplary cadres. 62

Some exemplary cadres were there already throughout the remoulding course, to help create a serious atmosphere, to exercise some psychological pressure, to remind the participants of their mistakes, and to set an example in "frank criticism and sincere self-criticism". Christian participants who had undergone thought-reform, later described it as Marxist "intensive retreat", "brain-washing cursillo", or likened it to the Catholic practice of confession with its five procedures: examination, confession (public in the Marxist case), contrition, resolution, and penance.

An outstanding example of the "contrite penitent"

after such an effective process of "washing away mistakes" was Phan Kế Toại who had served as royal delegate for Bao Dai in Hanoi until the Viet Minh seized the power. Because of his complete submission to the new rulers, Toại was allowed to survive and to assist at the Home Office. Later, Toại in a session of thought-reform, made a public confession in which he stated he had advised the French Commissioner at Vĩnh Phúc Yên to imprison the local herb-physician Đỗ Trọng Nhâm alias Xuân Thủy. ⁶³

This kind of concrete result of criticism and self-criticism was further obtained at the ideological remoulding course organised for brain workers from 15 July to 26 September 1953.

c). The Communist leaders considered intellectuals as "precious capital". The remoulding course for intellectuals was, then, carefully prepared and carried out with caution.

Ho Chi Minh, himself, the veteran revolutionary leader graduated from the Lenin University for the Far East, personally assisted the guidance of the course and delivered at its closing ceremony a highly persuasive speech ⁶⁴ which deserves to be cited and analysed at length.

After nine long weeks of learning historical materialism, dialectical materialism, criticism, self-criticism, and the like, in a tense and threatening, atmosphere the intellectuals at the remoulding course

were understandably nervous and fearful. At the closing ceremony of the course, President Ho undoubtedly provided most welcome relief with his opening words: "Today we are ending this course in a joyful mood". Ho proceeded, then, to ease their tension and fear with a reassuring word, skillfully injecting at the same time a discreet pre-condition:

Everyone has clearly realised that our Party, Government and people love and esteem the intellectuals ... who have formed a monolithic bloc with the people, who belong to the people.

Ho, now resorted to the art of frank yet bland criticism by giving a brief diagnosis of the bourgeois intellectuals' diseases while ascribing total responsibility to the "colonialists and feudalists":

As for the intellectuals, although they too were materially exploited by the colonialists and feudalists in a direct manner, they received a tiny part of the fruits of colonial exploitation, which was used to buy them. But the colonialists and feudalists ruthlessly oppressed and exploited the intellectuals in matters of the spirit. The intellectuals then became divorced from reality, from the people. A number of them indulged in day dreams and forgot that their country was enslaved and that they themselves were kept in bondage; they did not know who was their friend and who was their foe and could not distinguish right from wrong. This is a most cruel manoeuvre of the colonialists and feudalists.

To redeem the lives which they had lost - if not sold - to the colonialists and feudalists, the revolutionary leader asserted, the intellectuals must fulfil their patriotic duty towards the "national revolution", and consequently must "side with the peasants":

Everyone has clearly understood that, in order to free himself from slavery, to become independent and powerful, he must wage revolution and Resistance. The Resistance War is the continuation of the revolution to fulfil the revolutionary task. Ours is a revolution for national liberation, a people's democratic, anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolution; it is basically a peasant revolution, an agrarian revolution. ...Therefore those who love their Fatherland, especially the cadres, must take a definite stand; they must resolutely side with the peasants, the basic force, to bring the resistance to victory and achieve independence...

So far, it was only the question of first stage revolution, the bourgeois democratic revolution that many intellectuals had been supporting with great enthusiasm. To introduce them to the second stage of revolution, the resourceful leader was remarkably at ease with an intellectual approach based on scientific progress. In terms of the history of science, Ho Chi Minh briefly described a "changing and developing world" with so much development and so many scientific inventions. From among them, Ho singled out the

greatest one, which had been the soul of the second phase of revolution:

But the greatest invention and most rapid development is Marxism-Leninism.

In a few decades, this theory has spread throughout the world; it has demolished the old society and built up a new one on one third of the globe.

Making no mention of either communism or socialism, the shrewd speaker painted an attractive picture of the new, mighty, and beautiful world of democracy and peace in sharp contrast to the old, decaying, and miserable world of capitalism, imperialism, and feudalism:

Thirty six years ago, the whole world, the old one, belonged to capitalism, imperialism and feudalism. Today there exists a new and immense world, spreading from East Germany to Korea, passing through the Soviet Union and China. Eight hundred million people are sealed in a monolithic bloc in the ideological, political, economic and military field. Around this bloc of people, there are hundreds of millions of working people who, oppressed by imperialism and feudalism, are rising up to free themselves.

This is the world camp of democracy and peace headed by the Soviet Union.

Such oratorical skill produces the natural effect of pre-conditioning the audience and making their choice inevitable. In fact, the choice had been made for them:

"Viet Nam had been honoured with the membership of this glorious camp of democracy and peace", had made unexpected progress in every single field, and achieved a respectable status throughout the world:

What progress has Viet Nam made, as a member of this camp?

Nine years ago, the name of our country was overshadowed and unknown. Today, thanks to the revolution and the resistance, it is widely known in the world, feared by our enemies, and loved by our friends...

... In a word, nine years ago, our people were enslaved, today they are masters of the land. This is because our revolutionary path has been enlightened by Marxism-Leninism.

Also enlightened by the adroit Marxist-Leninist persuader was the path of those intellectual trainees. A clear conclusion was forcefully suggested, a definite political stand consistently argued, and "an honour and a heavy task" were so "courteously offered", that no realistic intellectuals who loved life could conceive of any alternative other than radically to transform themselves to keep pace with the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary leaders who had might and right:

To struggle in a glorious epoch and to serve as cadres for an heroic people are both an honour and a heavy task for the intellectuals. To fulfil this task you must keep pace with the movement and the progress of the people;

you must remould your ideology
and adopt a firm political stand.

As Marxism-Leninism was introduced on every possible occasion, the process of thought-reform was found necessary for all intellectuals especially those who "had been progressing too slowly". Some of them were Buddhists, Christians or Confucian scholars (such as Phan Khôi), but all of them had to undergo this traumatic "transformation", "despite their old age". This was the reason why, in the opening part of the speech, the old Ho had expressed his "appreciation for their good examples". In its closing part, to allay their shocking experience and to quieten their consciences when traditional thoughts had to give way to Marxist dialectics, the atheist politician shrewdly chose the familiar terms of Confucian ethics and a language similar to Saint Paul's ascetic exhortations to explain the requirements of the Marxist remoulding course:

We must constantly remember the words "right our mind and improve our virtues" in order to "rule the country and govern the people". "To right our mind and improve our virtues" is a work of transformation. It is a long and hard task, because it is an internal revolution for each of us. To arm ourselves with a new ideology in order to triumph over the old one, and to divorce ourselves from our old personality so as to become new men, are no easy matters and cannot be successfully completed in a single training course completed within a few months. We must intensify

our efforts to overcome great 66
difficulties and hardships.

To make sure that the ideological transformation will continue even after leaving the "remoulding center", President Ho advised the intellectuals to be firm in their determination to avail themselves of the effective help from the Party, the Government and the masses of people, and "to use the two sharp weapons of self-criticism and criticism without anxiety and concealment". Finally, his wish for continual progress was coupled with the threatening reminder of a continuous surveillance:

I hope that upon returning to your office and your localities, you will continue to study to transform yourselves into an intelligentsia of our time and of our people; the Party the Government and the people are looking forward to your endeavours.

Thanks to the insistant care of the "Party-Government-People" embodied in "the cadres in charge", thanks to the "sharp weapons of criticism and self-criticism", those intellectuals who had joined the resistance movement to fight French colonialism, to serve the country and the people, suddenly found themselves bathed in the blinding light of Marxism-Leninism and enveloped in the powerful net of the "people's democracy". Not without concealment", several writers and artists surrendered themselves and agreed to submit their written public confessions. The predictable form which such con-

fessions always took voiced a renunciation to their sinful past riddled with imperialism, colonialism, the bourgeoisie, and a resolution promising total service to the revolutionary cause, "the people" (in the proletarian meaning of the word) and "The Party", as seen in the following examples.

Nguyễn Tuấn, author of the well known Vang bóng một thời (The once glorious way of life) submitted the following statement after being ideologically remoulded:

Under the light of Marxism-Leninism focused on me by the Party, I see clearly now the meaning and the direction of true art and recognize that my past literary work is nothing but a series of mistakes and shameful actions. My self-claimed achievement consists only of my wrong doing which our generous people have forgiven me so that I might redeem it with my new work for the service of the revolution... I am enthusiastic to side with the poor peasants... under the leadership of the Party. 67

Likewise, the famous poet Thế Lữ, publicly confessed:

After completing the thought-reform session in the programme of Party reform, I have seen and recognised the truth... Being completely liberated, I am living an enlightened and purified life, dedicating all my abilities to the service of the revolutionary cause, the Party, and the people. 68

In the same vein, the artists Tô Ngọc Vân, Nguyen Văn Ty, the musicians Nguyen Xuân Khoát, Lê Yên, the architects Nguyen Cao Luyến, Hoàng Nhữ Tiệp, and many others, were assisted by the "cadres in charge" to see "the light of Marxism-Leninism", to publish their disavowal of evil and their new "profession of faith".

Those confessions and resolutions were widely publicized for the purpose of converting all other intellectuals. To popularize the persuading effect of the ideological remoulding campaign, Xuân Diệu, a young poet who was at one time secretary to President Ho, formulated his act of contrition in popular verses:

Hôm nay, hết học kỳ Chính Đảng,
Thầy bốn phưởng ánh sáng ủa vào.

.....
Lòng Đảng tựa núi xanh hùng vĩ,
Tôi xin theo chung thủy đến cùng.
Đào sâu suy nghĩ, cảm thông,
Mối hay Đảng ở trong lòng má ra.

.....
Đảng còn tranh đấu không thôi,
Ta còn theo Đảng, suốt đời tiến lên. 69

Today, at the completion of the Party
reform session,
The salvific light is poured into my
mind.

.....
The Party! Oh! how great and generous!
I vow my faithfulness to her until the
end.

Only after deep reflections and sincere
communications,
Have I become aware of the presence of
the Party in my own heart.

.....
As the Party continues her ceaseless
struggle,
I promise faithfully to follow her all
my life.

"Faithfully to follow the Party", this resolution represented the climax of all "new cultural activities", and adequately summarized the real purpose of the whole programme of Wraising the people's cultural level".

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VIII. Patriotic Emulation.

When all organisations had been consolidated, all political, economic, and cultural operations co-ordinated, the Ho Chi Minh Government endeavoured further to activate those mechanisms and progressively to intensify their activities.

Having a keen sense of politics, Ho made his appeal to both the national and personal interests of the people, raised the triple slogan Independence - Freedom - Happiness, and urged "venerable oldmen", "young pioneers", workers and peasants, intellectuals and specialists, public servants and soldiers, all Vietnamese without exception, to join in "patriotic emulation". Employing his favourite language of the slogan, Ho eloquently explained in June 1948:

What is the aim of our patriotic emulation?

- To fight famine and poverty,
To fight ignorance;
To fight the foreign invaders.

The way to do it is to rely upon
The people's force
The people's spirit

in order to achieve
The people's happiness. 70

Linking the emulation movement with the nation-

wide war of total resistance, Ho reassured his people of their final victory, provided that everybody took pains "to work quickly, to work well, and to produce more":

Briefly, everyone competes, everyone takes part in the Resistance war and the nation-building programme. The movement is rising and the patriotic emulation is deeply rooted and continues to spread over every field, pervading all strata of the people. It helps us to overcome all difficulties and to thwart the enemy's schemes in order to secure final victory. 71

The following year, on 1 August 1949, President Ho began a "new drive of patriotic emulation" firstly by reporting the glorious achievements in the economy, the popular education and the resistance war, secondly by correcting some shortcomings in connection with the emulation movement. Being an astute campaign leader, Ho rightly emphasized the heart of the matter, namely "motivation by conviction":

The essential point is clearly to explain to everybody how patriotic emulation is beneficial to him, to his family, to his village, and to his country. Once everybody has thoroughly understood this, all difficulties can be solved and all shortcomings overcome. 72

Thereupon, the revolutionary leader raised the emulation campaign to a higher tempo:

We must compete in every task which is beneficial to the national interests and the people's welfare, and relevant to the Resistance war and nation-building. Emulation must be undertaken by the whole people and in all fields.

The old politician Ho did not neglect to recall the four traditional virtues from Confucian ethics to be harmonized with some revolutionary slogans, so as to make the campaign drive easier for both the olds and the youngs:

In patriotic emulation, virtues such as Industriousness, Thrift, Probity and Justice must be highlighted.

The slogan for patriotic emulation at present is: All for victory. Victory over the colonialists. Victory over ignorance. Victory over famine. Victory over our defects.

From December 1948 to August 1949, two stages of competition were organised (the first one from 19 December 1948 to 19 May 1949, the second one from 19 May 1949 to 1 August 1949) under the inspiration of the triple slogan: "Cơm no, súng tốt, dánh thắng" (Sufficient food, good weapons, military victories).

Patriotic emulation reached into every field and required of everybody much harder work.

Soldiers competed in the movement of "Luyện quân lập công" (Arduous training to achieve feats of arms); teachers, public servants, cadres in "Rèn cán chính cỏ"

(Training cadres, readjusting organisations), workers in "Giỗ làm cứu nước" (Let us work overtime to save the country) and "Gây cơ sở, phá kỷ lục" (New bases, new records); peasants in "tăng gia sản xuất" (increasing production), in "bình dân học vụ" (progress in mass education) and "đóng thuế nông nghiệp" (emulation in paying agricultural tax), and other competition campaigns such as killing flies, killing rats, autumn harvest for victory, harvest for the army, and so forth.

Recognizing the impact of good example in competition, the resistance government propagated the practice of work evaluation, and promoted esteem for hard workers by decorating them with various titles of honour "cá nhân xuất sắc" (outstanding individual), "điển hình tốt" (exemplary person), "chiến sĩ thi đua" (competition champion). Thus, Phạm Quang Đăng was declared champion for having invented a mechanism which made the preparation of explosive 65 times faster; so was Miss Trùng thị Xín in Nghe An for having changed her style of work and "increased the production rate of 437%"; some physicians were accredited with "the local production of dry vaccine, penicillin," and so forth. ⁷³

In 1952 to compound political benefits from those competition campaigns, the Party and the Government chose May Day to open the National congress of emulation champions which gathered a total of 154 champions from agricultural, industrial and military fields.

The congress voted 7 national heroes, four of them military heroes, the rest heroes of labour:

Cù Chính Lan (posthumous decoration),
La Văn Cầu, Nguyễn Quốc Trị, Nguyễn
Thị Chiên, Ngô Gia Khảm, Hoàng Hanh,
and Trần Đại Nghĩa.

The last one was cited as "hero brain-worker" for his work on explosives and weapons, which industry he had learned mainly while serving the German arms - manufacturer Krupps during the second World War.

In his speech given to the "patriotic competition winners" at the Congress, Truong Chinh the secretary general of the Party, dialectically expounded the deep meaning of the movement:

The work of revolution must proceed by means of revolutionary emulation. Patriotic emulation is our revolutionary emulation, now.

...Emulation winners are those who best implement the policies of the Party and the Government, and are able to contribute good advice to the leading organs.

Patriotic emulation is an inexhaustible source giving rise to new heroes ... i.e., those who have an unshakable class stand.

... Patriotic emulation is an immense cadre-school where the teacher is the people and the principal is the Party. 74

President Ho characteristically hailed the emulation movement as "one of the great victories" and personally delivered a long speech to push forward the whole movement. It is interesting to note some of

his more persuasive lines:

Emulation fosters the unity of people...

Emulation is a practical and positive means of expressing one's love for the country...

If we love our country we must compete. Those who compete are the most enthusiastic patriots.

Emulation fosters the spirit of internationalism...

Emulation contributes to the protection of peace and democracy...

Emulation in increasing production and practising thrift takes place only in the Soviet Union, China, Viet Nam, and the other new democratic countries...

Emulation transforms man ... It has "intellectualised" the workers, peasants and soldiers, and "manualised" the intellectuals. 75

To promote the continuation of the emulation movement everywhere, the good humoured Uncle Ho took pains to please the Congress of competition winners by reciting some slogans rhymed together as popular verses:

Người người thi đua,
Ngành, ngành thi đua;
Ta nhất, định thắng,
Địch nhất, định thua.

Everybody competes,
Every field competes;
We are certain of victory,
The enemy, of defeat.

The childlike wording and rhyming of those short slogans, as the amiable manners and the benign mien of the well-meaning Uncle Ho, may well have given the audience the impression of a rustic, saintly old man. Such a simple, favourable impression can easily disarm any political objection and dissipate any suspicion about the well named "patriotic emulation". But the real significance of the whole movement with its final direction and purpose, could only be perceived through an introductory paragraph persuasively uttered by the skilful, undeclared Communist leader in the beginning of the same speech:

Thanks to the emulation to increase production and to practice thrift, the Soviet Union in building Communism, and China builds new democracy...

Our people compete to increase production and practice thrift in order to improve the living and raise the spirit of the army and the people, and to meet the needs of the Resistance.

Our soldiers compete to kill the enemies... in order to bring the Resistance war to victory, carry out national construction, and achieve new democracy to advance to socialism. 76

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IX. Political mobilisation of the entire people.

In his pamphlet, Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi (The Resistance will win), which served as "a catechism of resistance" since 1947, Truong Chinh cited Clausewitz

and Karl Marx ⁷⁷ to emphasize the conviction that "military action is a measure by which politics are conducted". Yet, the same authoritarian spokesman of the "Indochinese Marxist Association" vehemently argued against those who were inclined to rely exclusively on military action:

They tend to believe that everything can be settled by armed forces, they do not apply political mobilisation and are unwilling to give explanations in order to convince people; they even use threats, or bring pressure to bear on the people. Or, fighting spiritedly, they neglect political action; they do not seek ways of building ties of affection between officers and men, do not act in such a way that the army and the people can wholeheartedly help one another; and they neglect propaganda directed to the breaking of the morale of the enemy troops. 78

After six months of nation-wide resistance, Su That (Truth), the official paper of the Indochinese Marxist Association, published an article (No.79, 26 June 1947) entitled "The importance of the psychological mobilisation of the people for the long-term resistance". The article, signed by Tâm Nguyễn, explained the reasons why the political mobilisation was necessary for victory and proposed concrete measures to implement the decision of the Party which had been based on the teaching of Lenin. It was suggested in this article that the different organisms of political mobilisation be re-activated and that this network be systematically consolidated and extended

downwards through the zones and provinces until it reached the district areas. To the committees of agit-prop already active among the workers, the peasants, the youth, and the women - these had originally been established in many areas as long ago as the 1930's and 1940's - were now to be added further agit-prop teams for operations among intellectuals, students (tri' vậ), and "the religious compatriots" (giáo vậ). Besides the dân vậ (agit-prop in the Communist controlled areas), activities were urged in nguy vậ (agit-prop in "puppet" governed areas) and dich vậ (agit-prop among the enemy i.e., French people).

The nguy vậ and the dich vậ were subdivided each into three branches dân vậ (agit-prop among the civilians), chính vậ (among politicians, civil servants), and binh vậ (among soldiers). The following lists the composite elements in this somewhat complex agit-prop mechanism:

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|---|
| A. | <u>Dân vậ</u>
(among the
people in
Communist
areas) | 74 { | 1. công-vậ (among workers)
2. nông-vậ (among peasants)
3. thanh-vậ (among the youth)
4. phụ-vậ (among women)
5. tri'-vậ (among intellectuals)
6. giáo-vậ (among religious believers) |
| B. | <u>Nguy vậ</u>
(in puppet
government
areas) | { | 1. dân vậ (among civilians)
2. chính vậ (among public servants)
3. binh vậ (among soldiers) |

- C. Địch vận (among Frenchmen) {
- 1. dân vận (among French civilians)
 - 2. chính vận (among French public servants)
 - 3. binh vận (in the French army)

Note: Agit-prop operations against the French were not confined to Indochina but were carried on actively inside Metropolitan France and French overseas territories.

For the programme of preparation, the Su That article listed three points:

1. Thoroughly studying the living situation of the people;
2. Determining a special direction for each individual agit-prop campaign;
3. Training the new cadres of agit-prop.

Since different forms of agit-prop had been suggested in Truong Chinh's articles and the pamphlet on Resistance, Su That, No.79, emphasized only one form, the most effective one, i.e., bettering the people's living conditions:

In order to operate the mechanism of agit-prop more effectively and harmoniously, we must aim at bettering the people's living conditions, because this is the key to open our way into the broad masses of the people with a view to mobilising them for action.

The article then went on to recommend concrete measures such as good management of food supply so as to benefit the people, organising producers' co-operatives, consumers' co-operatives, effective trans-

portation of materials and products, reduction of land rents and interest rates, abolition of fees and gifts, and so forth.

General Vo Nguyen Giap in his pamphlet on guerilla warfare, also emphasized total mobilisation of the people as an effective counter-measure to the Autumn-Winter offensive on the part of the French troops. ⁸⁰

But the leader responsible for most exhortations concerned with political mobilisation was always President Ho. As early as in 1944 Ho Chi Minh had prepared a pamphlet on guerilla warfare in which he advised his followers to avail themselves of a correct political line such as "fighting the French and the Japanese for our independence", and to rely on the masses of people because "if the guerillas are likened to fishes, the people, to water". ⁸¹

Likewise, in his "instruction to establish the Viet Nam propaganda unit for national liberation" (December 1944), Ho recommended "mobilising and arming the whole people" and emphasized that "greater importance should be rather attached to the political side". ⁸²

Indeed, the utmost importance had been attributed to political mobilisation or agit-prop, wherever Communist training or revolutionary enterprises took place. This was the reason why, before planning the August uprising in 1945, the Vietnamese Communist leaders had prepared a "manual for political commissars" ⁸³

in which minute details of political mobilisation drawn from Russian and Chinese documents, were compiled to instruct the Vietnamese agents of agit-prop.

The mobilisation work was planned in three directions: "towards the soldiers", "towards the people" and "towards the enemies". In each field, activities and techniques were outlined and explained with great care as illustrated in the following extract:

Political action in the mobilisation of the people.

-
1. Firstly, a committee should be created for each locality. The committee must include one or more persons who have prestige and enjoy the trust of the people, a representative of the people's government, and a representative of the Viet Minh organisation.

The Committee should conduct an investigation about the total population, associations, those who can serve as soldiers, those who work for production, the mentality of the people, reactionary forces.... Then, a clear plan of agit-prop, the number of personnel and the period of time should be determined accordingly. Concurrently, the committee has to prepare materials for agit-prop such as handbills, posters, tactics of oral propaganda, folk songs, and so forth.

Subsequently a meeting should be convened to gather those cadres who are able to assist the agitation. After being instructed on the necessity of agit-prop, its plan and tactics of implementation, the cadres are assigned to specific areas.

2. How to do propaganda and agitation?

Every effort must be made to win the support of the people for the agitation.

- a) The propaganda work requires much patience and perseverance. Very often the cadres must render assistance to the people or mingle with the people and work with them in the ricefields to do some propaganda.
- b) The content of agit-prop: the cadres must take pains to instruct the people that to be a revolutionary soldier is a duty and honour for each citizen, then, to explain the remote and ultimate benefits which will be derived from the national liberation, and the immediate benefits if the revolutionary forces grow stronger and score victory after victory.
- c) Handbills and posters bearing slogans are good means of propaganda. But since live words are normally more effective, propaganda should be carried mostly by means of meetings, speeches, plays, folk songs (preferably with musical instruments), and so forth.

3. How to organise agit-prop?

- One cannot be too careful.

- a) All the cuu quoc (national salvation) associations, the armed groups, the defence teams, each and every one of the "awakened people" must participate in the agit-prop, in such a manner that a wife should work to motivate her husband, a son his father, a young lady her own sister, everybody, everywhere, should enthusiastically engage in the work of agit-prop.

- b) The more enthusiastic elements should be commissioned to activate the broad masses of people, while members of the defence units and resolute cadres of the Viet Minh Front should volunteer for military service to set a good example to others.
- c) Since all of these activities should be observed and encouraged, the cadres in charge must file reports to the leading committee and the committee must send inspectors to different areas.
- d) For self-protection against destructive opponents we must be well prepared to react to their dangerous arguments and schemes. 84

Ho Chi Minh, who in all probability made an important contribution to the compilation of the above manual, 85 skilfully applied all its political recommendations in his relationships with the many people who came in contact with him. Being an accomplished persuader, Ho naturally incorporated the tactics of agit-prop in his numerous presidential messages as well as in his private correspondence. Outstanding examples of the latter were Ho's letters to Dr. Vũ Đình Tụng who had lost his son in the violent conflicts in Hanoi, (86) to Đặng Phúc Thông, an engineer who fell ill while devotedly serving the national cause of resistance (87), and to Kim-Phong, Ho's former comrade in China. (88)

Typical of the advice President Ho was wont to offer on the subject of agit-prop, are the following extracts from his letter to the Conference of political commissars in March 1948:

1. With regard to the soldiers:

The political commissars must constantly take care of their material requirements, such as food, clothing, housing, rest, drilling, work and combative force. In their moral and intellectual life, he must pay attention to raising their sense of discipline, combating libertinism, developing culture and the political line in the army...

2. With regard to the people:

The people are the foundation, the fathers and mothers of the army. The political commissar must win their confidence, esteem and love. He must ensure that the army enjoy the people's confidence, love and esteem; for this purpose, he must urge the soldiers to help the people and to fight the enemy valiantly.

3. With regard to the enemy:

Towards the French soldiers as well as foreigners and Vietnamese serving in the French army, the political commissar must know how to make propaganda prudently and realistically in order to provoke their thinking and win them over to our side. 89

Following the same line, in a report to the 1949 conference of military leaders in Nam Bo (Cochinchina), Le Duân reminded his comrades of the necessity for political mobilisation among the masses of people.

Since the goal of our war is vi dan, vi nuoc. (for the interests of the people and country), our strategem consists of mobilising and arming the whole nation to fight the enemy.

Because our struggle is a struggle of all the people, our principle battlefield is the people...

...The only strategem for us is to rely on the forces of the people, the initiatives and sacrifices on the part of the people...

Our stratagem is to use the war issue, to arouse the enthusiasm of the entire people and to unite the whole nation in the struggle. 90

To arouse the enthusiasm of the people and to thrust them into the battlefield, the SuThat newspaper (No.72, 25 March 1947) in a highly emotive, even "bloody" article, urged the deepening of hatred as an effective motivation:

For more than a year now the French reactionaries have been trampling the Southern part of our land under their feet.

During the last four months, the crimes they have committed in the port city of Haiphong are beyond number.

Over the past three months, their bloody hands have plunged deeper into the blood of our compatriots throughout the country.

Yes, the blood of many a Vietnamese grandfather, grandmother, father, mother and more odiously, alas! the scarlet blood of many an innocent child and infant has been shed

abundantly by the French invaders' bullets, bayonets, grenades and bombs.

The French invaders have not spared any religion nor any grouping. No, they thrust their bayonets indiscriminately into the backs, the chests, and the faces of all Vietnamese, making no distinction between Catholic or Buddhist, poor or rich, lowlander or highlander. Churches have been destroyed, statues of Buddha desecrated, houses burned...

...Dear compatriots! we already hate the invaders. Let us deepen our hatred! Let us inflame our hatred! Let us kindle the flames of our hatred and intensify them constantly so that no matter what our age, our religion, or our grouping, we shall always be eager to destroy our enemies.

...During this period, we have no feeling for French colonialists but our hatred.

...Whoever is lacking in hatred against the reactionary colonialists, is not worthy of being a Vietnamese.

To strengthen the logic of hatred, the Su That article resorted to the authority of Marshal Stalin by citing from his military order to the Red troops in the second World War: "You cannot defeat the enemy unless you rekindle against him a burning hatred from the bottom of your hearts".

Thus the principal method of political mobilisation during the resistance war was summarized by Truong Chinh in the slogan: "Love for the country and hatred for the enemy".⁹¹

As for the result of this assiduous work of political mobilisation, Ho Chi Minh himself, the prime mover of the Vietnamese revolution, later declared with great satisfaction to his national assembly, convened at an unnamed place towards the end of the resistance war (December 1953):

Our forces lie in millions of peasants who are eagerly waiting for the Government and Party to organise and lead them in order enthusiastically to rise up and smash the feudal and colonial yoke. With skilful organisation and leadership, these forces will shake heaven and earth, and completely destroy all the colonialists and feudalists. 92

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X. Mustering international support.

In 1945, when the Viet Minh members appeared in Hanoi to seize power, when Ho Chi Minh presented the members of his Provisional Government to the nation, no Vietnamese, except their very few personal friends, knew who they were. But since the very beginning of their revolutionary life i.e., from the 1920's and 1930's, the undeclared Communist leaders had been learning to relate the important events in Indochina to the situation in the rest of the world. Having served as veteran revolutionary organiser in France, Russia, China and South-East Asia, Ho Chi Minh fully appreciated the value of whatever support he could muster from any grouping or movement anywhere in the world.

A wide campaign was launched in August 1945: the whole city of Hanoi was bustling with a colourful welcome for the delegation of the Allies. Banners, streamers and posters carried slogans written in Vietnamese, English, Chinese, Russian and French. The slogans had been prepared in advance by the Viet Minh Front and were later reproduced in the Viet Minh newspaper Dân Chủ (No.3, 27 August 1945):

Independence or Death.
Down with French imperialism.

French domination: 2,000,000
people starved to death.

Viet Nam to the Vietnamese.

Long live the Independence
of Viet Nam.

To compound the political dividend from the visit of the "international delegation", a press conference was scheduled on Saturday 25 August 1945.

The same Viet Minh newspaper announced the imminent arrival of the Chinese Nationalist Troops as delegates of the Allied Forces, and a huge welcoming demonstration was organised by the Viet Minh Front. People were urged to carry the following slogans:

Chinese and Vietnamese are friends!
Down with the imperialist invaders!
Support the people's revolutionary
Government!

Likewise, in Saigon, the Viet Minh Front was at pains to organise a welcome to the British forces with similar slogans to win their support.

In the proclamation "of Independence on 2 September 1945, the "most enlightened" (Chi Minh) Ho did not neglect to quote from the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Human Rights. From that date onwards, a wide campaign was skilfully conducted to obtain the support of different nations, governments, political parties, "democratic movements", cultural groups, and outstanding personalities, in favour of the Ho Chi Minh Government and its political policies. A few samples culled from the Viet Minh newspapers during the last three months of 1945 will suffice to illustrate the far-sighted expansion of political mobilisation throughout the world.

Dan Chu newspaper (No.32, 1 October 1945) published the news that Tran Huy Lieu, Minister of Information and Propaganda had denounced to the world the atrocities committed by the British, Indian, French and Japanese soldiers in Nam Bo. Two days later the same paper (No.34, 3 October 1945) carried a letter from Vietnamese cultural workers addressed to British journalists and writers, conveying their vehement protest against the British co-operation with the French soldiers in their attack on Saigon and their massacre of Vietnamese civilians.

Cuu Quoc newspaper (No.81, 2 November 1945) reported that 25,000 Vietnamese residents in France had appealed to the British people to recall the British troops from Viet Nam. A later issue of Cuu Quoc (No. 130, 31 December 1945) happily announced that

"the British press had bitterly criticized the French colonialists".

During that same period, Tran Van Giàu, the then powerful Viet Minh leader in Nam Bo (Cochinchina) reportedly has addressed a telegram to the British, American and Soviet Foreign Ministers attending the Moscow Conference. In the name of the Resistance Committee, of Nam Bo, Giàu requested the Big Powers to intervene so as to secure the recognition of "Viet Nam's Independence under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh" (Cuu Quoc, No.125, 24 December 1945).

The Chien Thang paper (No.7, 28 October 1945) happily reported favourable results achieved by the campaign:

The democratic countries such as the United States of America and China already understand our deep aspirations for national independence.

In France, in the general election, the leftists received the highest number of votes. We hope that French colonialism will be completely destroyed. 93

During the year of 1946, a "good will" delegation to France, headed by Pham Van Dong, and a state visit by Ho Chi Minh were planned as part of the diplomatic campaign for international support. In fact, the French Communist and Socialist Parties were responsive to the appeals of their "Vietnamese brothers" and conducted a vigorous campaign against the French Government.

In march 1947, when the French National Assembly was divided by an emotional debate on the Viet Nam question, Su That newspaper (No.72, 25 March 1947) published an analysis of the event and concluded that the Viet Nam conflict had proved to be a very divisive issue in France. The following issue of Su That (No.73, 22 April 1947) triumphantly declared: "We are not alone in our struggle", and offered a factual explanation:

As soon as the French National Assembly adjourned, throughout the whole country "the movement of French workers arose to demand immediate negotiation with Viet Nam", pay rises and opposition to the reactionaries...

The anti-war movement in France, the revolutionary movement for national liberation in the French colonies, and the movement of "Support for the Viet Nam Revolution" throughout the world, these three movements are very helpful to our national struggle.

We are not alone in our struggle because so many friends are supporting us. Who are our friends? - The French people and the progressive democratic associations in France; the oppressed peoples in the French Union; the democratic peace-loving forces in the world.

The French people have begun to oppose the war and support our stand.... We must close our ranks and struggle more stoically. Final victory will be certainly ours.

In the same vein, Truong Chinh, in his pamphlet, The Resistance will win. (pp. 46-47), outlined the agenda for the Vietnamese to win their diplomatic battle:

In the matter of foreign policy, what must our people do? We must isolate the enemy, win more friends. We must act in such a way that the French people and the French colonial peoples will actively support us and oppose the reactionary French colonialists, that all peace-loving forces in the world will defend us and support the aims of our resistance....

We must make the progressive forces throughout the world realise that we are making sacrifices and exerting efforts for the cause of world peace and democracy too. In the struggle for peace and democracy, these forces cannot remain indifferent to our struggle or support Viet Nam only by words where deeds are required. They must arraign France before the tribunal of world opinion, which will judge her and compel her to stop the war of rapine in Indochina, a war completely contrary to the ideals of the United Nations Charter. Moreover, they should help the Indochinese peoples both materially and morally, so as rapidly to crush the reactionary French colonialists, the avowed enemies of world-peace and democracy.

In this campaign to win international support, as always, President Ho took the lead by issueing his "Message to the French people and the peoples of the Allied Nations", "Letter to the French Government,

National Assembly and People", "Telegram to the Pan-Asian Conference", "replies to a foreign correspondent", and so forth. ⁹⁴ Ho also gave his cadres a special lesson on the propaganda work:

We have not yet concentrated all possible means and mobilised all our abilities for propaganda. That is why our transmission of information is still very slow and does not reach the broad massesOur propaganda among the prisoners of war and enemy troops as well as abroad is still very weak. We have not known how to make excerpts from enemy newspapers which express anger at the colonialist military commanders, politicians and administrative authorities for only caring about having a good time and disputing over personal interests while their soldiers die on the battlefields" without a wreath being laid or a tear being shed for them".

We have failed to base ourselves on this material when compiling leaflets to foment agitation among the enemy's ranks, give explanations to the prisoners of war, and disseminate propaganda among the ⁹⁵ population in enemy-held areas.

To foment more agitation and protest among the peace-loving people in the world, the Resistance Government of Ho Chi Minh created a peace organisation in 1950, organised a peace congress, and despatched several delegations to international peace conferences, Youth festivals, trade unions congresses and so forth.

On 2 September 1951, President Ho proudly announced the international support which this campaign had gained:

Our country is part and parcel of the great community of world democracy. People in the friendly countries warmly support us. The French people and prominent personalities throughout the world also side with us. Therefore, I express to them our gratitude on behalf of our compatriots, army and Government.⁹⁶

Other effective means of creating a guilt complex in France and inciting at the same time anger and condemnation throughout the world, were the establishment of the "committee of Peace and Repatriation" among the prisoners of war, the denunciation of the enemy's crimes against the poor people of Viet Nam, and the publicity given to the "confessions" of captured enemy soldiers.⁹⁷ Those tactics were skilfully incorporated in an article written by Ho Chi Minh and published in the *Cominform Review*, For a lasting peace, for a People's Democracy, in April 1952 under the pen name of Din.⁹⁸

In this campaign to influence public opinion in the outside world, the Communist leaders, although they consistently refused to admit Western press correspondents to the territory they controlled, nevertheless found it profitable to admit a few carefully selected foreign writers and journalists, men such as the Australian Communist Wilfred Burchett, a "certain

Swedish correspondent", and the like.

In fact, it was under the form of "Replies to a Swedish correspondent" in November 1953 that Ho Chi Minh conveyed his readiness to engage in negotiations with the French Government, while his lieutenant Vo Nguyen Giap was feverishly preparing for the assault on Dien Bien Phu. In this message, Ho shrewdly introduced innuendos to exploit "the contradictions" among his international enemies:

If there are neutral countries who try to speed up a cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam by means of negotiations, they will be welcomed.

...I have constantly showed my sympathy, affection and respect for the French people and the French peace fighters. Today not only is the independence of Viet Nam seriously jeopardised but the independence of France is also gravely threatened. On the one hand, the U.S. imperialists urge the French colonialists to continue and expand the aggressive war in Viet Nam, thus weakening them more and more through fighting, and hoping to replace France in Indochina. On the other hand, they force France to ratify the European defence treaty which is to revive German militarism.

Therefore, the struggle of the French people to secure for France independence [from the U.S. pressure], democracy and peace, and to end the war in Viet Nam, is one of the most important factors leading to the settlement of the Viet Nam question by peaceful means. 99

To win more powerful friends, on the other hand, the Government of Ho Chi Minh dedicated the whole month of January 1954 as the month of "Viet-Chinese-Russian Friendship". Nhan Dan newspaper (No. 160, 16 January 1954) boasted of the friendly support, not only from Russia and China, but also from Korea, Mongolia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania and the Democratic Republic of Germany.

As the date of the attack on Dien Bien Phu drew nearer and the fury of the anti-war movement daily increased in France and other countries, Ho continued exploiting his "International Solidarity" against France:

On this occasion [the seventh anniversary of the nation-wide resistance war, 19 December 1953], I, on behalf of the Vietnamese people, convey my affectionate greetings to the French people and people in the French colonies. I thank the working people in the world for having observed this date as "International Solidarity Day with the Vietnamese People" and thank all the friends of peace for their warm support for our resistance war.

...With the solidarity of our people and other peace-loving people, our armed resistance will certainly be victorious. 100

In May 1954,,when the French forces were being defeated at Dien Bien Phu, it was through the Antara News Agency of Indonesia that President Ho conveyed his conditions for negotiations with France. ¹⁰¹

During the Geneva Conference (from 26 April to 21 July 1954), a whole series of articles in Nhân Dân were aiming at "dividing enemies and winning friends" on the international stage: "Welcome the voices of peace on the part of Soviet and China" (Nhân Dân, No. 187, 22 May 1954): "The French people support us" (No. 188, 25 May 1954); "The Laniel Cabinet overthrown"; "The French Communist Party is raising the banner of Independence and Democracy" (No. 195, 16 June), and many others.

Being entrusted with the formation of a new cabinet, Mendes France promised, under the pressure of French public opinion, to secure peace in Indochina within thirty days: Nhân Dân (No. 198, 25 June) published a special article to praise Mendes France for being more progressive, and to welcome his idea of "seeking peace in a short period of time". Through the Viet Nam News Agency, Ho Chi Minh also gladly welcomed the desire of the new French Premier rapidly to achieve a cease-fire in Indochina. ¹⁰²

After many complicated diplomatic manoeuvres had obtained the decisive intervention of V. Molotov through the co-operation of Chou En-lai ¹⁰³ the Geneva Conference reached the "agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Indochina" which were signed by midnight 20 July 1954 just as the Ho Chi Minh - Moutet Modus Vivendi was in the night of 14 September 1946. The resentment and bitterness of the Vietnamese people everywhere against the partition of their homeland did

not prevent Ho Chi Minh from issuing on the following day an appeal crowning his campaign for international support with a high note of triumphalism:

The Geneva Conference has come to an end. It is a great victory for our diplomacy....

This great victory is also due to the support given us in our just struggle by the peoples of our brother countries, by the French people, and by the peace-loving people of the world....

From now on, we must make every effort to consolidate peace and achieve reunification, independence, and democracy throughout our country. 104

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Throughout the period of anti-French war (1946-54), by means of political mobilisation and patriotic emulation, the revolutionary leaders consistently urged all their subjects to remain closely united under the strong leadership of Ho Chi Minh, to raise production and practice self-sufficiency for the purpose of "total sacrifice for the success of national resistance and nation-building". Simultaneously, all the "patriotic organisations" created or patronised by the revolutionaries were cemented into a national united front, forming a monolithic bloc further to consolidate the Government of Resistance and the leading Party whose multiplied activities and continuous growth were kept out of sight. Drastic changes in social and political systems were

also gradually introduced under a plan of "bettering the people's living conditions" based on the proletarian land-reform, and a sophisticated plan of "raising the people's cultural level" which culminated in the firm establishment of the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Such a multi-aspect and far-reaching programme, attractively entitled Kháng-Chiến, Kiến-Quốc (National Resistance and Nation-Building), combined with a highly effective military policy based on Leninist-Mao st strategy, strengthened by the support from communist countries and international "peace-loving democratic forces" finally led the Marxist revolutionary leaders in Viet Nam to the decisive victory at Dien Bien Phu (May 1954) and made them masters of North Viet Nam, after the Geneva Conference.

Hailing the victory, Ho Chi Minh, the successful Marxist revolutionary leader, proposed for the next phase of revolutionary struggle, three new duties and ten immediate tasks which were summarized in the slogan:

PEACE - UNIFICATION - INDEPENDENCE - DEMOCRACY. 105

Some insight may be gained if such a cryptic slogan is compared with the plan of "linking patriotism to internationalism" and the conclusion of Ho Chi Minh's article published in the Communist Review, For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy:

The Vietnamese people's future
is as bright as the sun in
Spring. Overjoyed at the rad-
iance of the sun in spring, we

shall struggle for the splendid future of Viet Nam, for the future of democracy, world peace and Socialism. We triumph at the present time, we shall triumph in the future, because our path is enlightened by the great Marxist-Leninist doctrine. 106

Indeed, the cease-fire and the partition of Viet Nam in July 1954 ended the Viet - French war only to open a new period of struggle for the Communists: socialist revolution in the North and democratic nationalist revolution in the South. Against, to foster political persuasion and to characterize the "new situation and new tasks", was coined a new slogan:

Củng cố miền Bắc,
Chiếu cố miền Nam. 107

Consolidate the North,
Heed the South.

Footnotes for Chapter VII

1. Ho Chi Minh, "Answers to the Press" (2 January 1947), Nhung loi keu goi, vol.I, p.116.
2. Sec, for example, Ho Chi Minh, May Day message (1949), Tuyen Tap, p.306. Cf. Ibid, pp.372, 464, 468.
3. Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal on the sixth National Day" (1951), Tuyen Tap, p.382.
4. Truong Chinh, Khang chien nhat dinh thang loi, p.34.
5. Ibid., p.37.
6. Ibid., p.36.
7. Ibid., p.35.
8. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyen Tap, p.464.
9. Rf. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.261-262.
10. Tho Ho Chu Tich (Hanoi: Van hoc, 1967), pp.28 and 34.
11. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.150.
12. Ibid., p.260. Italics from the text.
13. Ibid., p.265-267. Italics added.
14. Ibid., p.244 (Political Report, February 1951).
15. Ibid., p.150 (Letter to the National Congress of the Viet Minh, April 1948).
16. Ibid., p.268.
17. Truong Chinh, op.cit., pp.118-119.
18. Truong Chinh, Khang chien nhat dinh thang loi, p.38-39.
19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p.34.
21. Ho Chi Minh (December 1950), Selected Works, vol.III, pp.230-231.
22. Ibid., p.273 (Address on the occasion of the inauguration of the Congress to merge the Viet Minh and Lien Viet Fronts,,3 March 1951).
23. Ibid., pp.264-265, (February 1951).
24. Ibid., p.275 (March 1951) .
25. Rf. Quan doi nhan dan (Army review), (Hanoi, 1962), p.115.
26. Rf. Ho Chi Minh, et al., Ban ve chien tranh nhan dan..., (Hanoi, 1966), p.110.
27. Ibid., p.117
28. Ho Chi Minh, Nhung loi keu goi, p.257.
29. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyen Tap, p.350
- 30.. See, for example, Our President Ho Chi Minh (Hanoi, 1970), after p.136.
31. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.33.
32. Ibid., pp.40-41, 114-115, 122.
33. Ibid., p.97, Cf. Ibid., pp.52, 163, 169.
34. Ibid., p.132.
35. Ibid., p.137. Italics added.
36. Instruction of the Party Central Committee cited by Tran Phuong, "The Land Reform", in Vietnamese Studies, No.7 Pages of History (1945-1954), (Hanoi, 1965), p.171. Italics added.
37. Ibid., p.178. Italics added.

38. Ibid., p.186. Italics added.
39. Ibid., pp.153-154, 165, 191.
- 40.. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.263.
Cf. Ibid., pp.378, 422.
41. Ibid., p.420 (Tuyen Tap. p.464). Italics added.
42. Ibid., p.425, (Italics added. Report to the National Assembly, Third Session: 1-4 December 1953). This Third Session of the National Assembly was said to have performed a significant act, namely the passage of the Land Reforms Law, based on the reports of President Ho and comrade Pham Van Dong. It is significant for readers to observe that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had laid down concrete measures for implementing the agrarian policy in its session of January 1948, and adopted the policy of an all-out mobilization of the masses to implement land reform in its fourth session of January 1953, which admittedly marked an important change in the Party's leadership during the Resistance War.
43. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.43. (Italics added); Nguyen Khanh Toan, Twenty years' development of Education in the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (Hanoi: Ministry of Education, 1965), p.4.
44. Nguyen Khanh Toan, op.cit., p.17.
45. Ibid., p.11.
46. Cited by Nguyễn Khánh Toàn, Ibid., p.18.
47. Education in the D.R.V., (Vietnamese Studies No.5), (Hanoi, 1965), pp.3-4.
48. Nguyễn Khánh Toàn, op.cit., p.11. Italics added.

49. Nguyen Van Huyen, "Nen giao duc cua nuoc Viet Nam Dan Chu Cong Hoa", in Su Nghiep Kinh te va Van hoa (1945-1960) by Nghiem Xuan Yem and others (Hanoi: Su That, 1960), p.207. *Italics added.*
50. Ibid., p.218.
51. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.278.
52. Nguyen Van Huyen, op.cit., p.208.
53. Ibid., p.217. *Italics added.*
54. This is a part of Mao's long article "On New Democracy" which appeared in the first number of the Chinese Culture magazine founded in January 1946.
Rf. Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Peking, second edition 1967), vol.II, pp.339-382.
55. Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, et al., Ban ve Van hoa va Van nghe (Hanoi: Van hoa, 1964), p.29.
56. Truong Chinh, Chu nghia Mac va van hoa Viet Nam (Hoi Van nghe V.N.xuat ban, 1949). This pamphlet incorporated Mao's ideas On Literature and Art. Rf. Mao's Selected Works, vol.III, pp.69-98.
57. Ban ve Van hoa....., p.35.
58. Ibid., p.37.
59. Ibid., pp.42-43.
60. Ibid., p.44.
61. Ibid., p.45.
62. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, pp.357 and 358.
63. Ibid., p.388.

64. Đỗ Trọng Nham was practising Sino-Viet traditional medicine under the trade name Xuân Thủy Y Quan and contributed some news reporting to pro-, gressive newspapers in Hanoi such as Tin Tức (News), Thời Thế (Times), Le Travail (Labour), Notre Voix (Our Voice). Nham's information helped a group of leftist journalists and writers (Đặng Xuân Khu, Vo Nguyen Giáp, Hà Bá Cang, Đặng Thái Mai and others) to denounce the alleged corruption of Phan Kế Toại, then provincial mandarin (Tuần vũ) at Vĩnh Phúc Yên. Towards the end of 1937, after the collapse of the Popular Front in France the leftist movement in Viet Nam was repressed by the Viet-French Administration. Mandarin Toại found it opportune to recommend the incarceration of Nham.

After the Japanese coup d'état (March 1945), Nham was released from the Son La prison where he had been converted by Communist prisoners, and went to join the Viet Minh leaders in the North West Zone. Do Trong Nham was later commissioned with the publication of the Cuu Quoc newspaper under the pen name of Xuân Thủy, until 1960 when Ho Chi Minh offered him the port-folio of Hanoi's Foreign Ministry. Recently Xuan Thuy became well known to the outside world as the head of Hanoi delegation to the Paris peace negotiations since 1969.

65. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.402-407.
66. Ibid., p.406, Italics added.
67. Cited in Nghiem Ke To, Viet Nam mau lua (Saigon: Mai Linh, 1954), p.407.
68. Ibid., p.409.
69. Ibid., pp.410-411.
70. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.151.
71. Ibid., p.153.
72. Ibid., p.169.

73. Rf. Su nghiệp Kinh tế và Văn hóa (1945-1960) by Nguyễn Văn Tao et al. (Hanoi: Su That, 1960), p.236.
Professor Pham Dinh Ai, for instance, was given the credit of producing chlorific acid but frankly denied it after escaping from North Viet Nam to the South.
74. Rf. Thanh niên với chủ nghĩa anh hùng cách mạng (Hanoi: Thanh niên, 1966), pp.14-17.
75. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, pp.349-354, (passim).
76. Ibid., p.345. Italics added.
77. Karl Marx: "War is a continuation of politics", Clausewitz: "War is a means of politics. War is the continuation of politics by other means". See Truong Chinh, The Resistance will win, (Hanoi, 1947), pp.102-103.
78. Truong Chinh, op.cit., p.103.
79. Since the agit-prop activities were primarily aiming at those who did not join the organizations of the Viet Minh or Communist Front, there were no special committee of agit-prop, for instance among public servants under the Communist leadership. These people were trained and transformed, instead, by means of study meetings, democratic study conferences, ideological remoulding courses, and so forth. On the other hand, the agit-prop among soldiers was entrusted to a hierarchy of political commissars in the army (p.45). Hence a slightly different shade of meaning between the dân vận in A and in B1, C1, where was added sometimes, the thần vận (agit-prop among one's relatives).
80. Vo Nguyen Giap, Phát động du kích chiến tranh (1947), pp.5-6.

81. Ho Chi Minh, Cách đánh du kích (1944).
82. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyên Tập, p.200.
83. The pamphlet was published a short time after the seize-power in Hanoi: Chính trị viên trong quân đội. (Hanoi: Moi. 1945), 80 pages, pocket size. See Appendix D1, Infra, p.475.
84. Ibid., pp.12-16.
85. See, for example, page 43 in which appeared the word tận (strongly, much) a term exclusively popular in Nghe An.
86. Rf. Truong Chinh, Ho Chu tịch, (Hanoi: Su That, 1966), p.66; See also Chúng ta có Hồ, (Hanoi: Lao Dong, 1965), p.178.
87. Rf. Đồng Tùng, Ho Chi Minh và tôi, inedited manuscript, p.24.
88. Ibid., p.101.
89. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, pp.140-141.
90. Bàn về Chiến tranh Nhân dân (Hanoi, 1966), pp.168-169. *Italics added.*
91. Truong Chinh, Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi, p.49.
92. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyên Tập, p.468.
93. It is highly interesting that the Viet Minh news editor employed here the Vietnamese expression "đào tận gốc, tróc tận rễ" which had been wide-spread during the Nghe An Soviet movement of 1930-31, in connection with the "complete demolition of Intellectuals, Rich men, Landlords and Local bullies".
94. Rf. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, pp83-86, 87-89, 105, 308-325, 408, 410, 430....
95. Ibid., pp.222-223.

96. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.284;
Cf. Ibid., p.297.
97. See, for example, Pierre Richard, Cinq ans prisonier des Viets (Paris: editions de la Serpe, 1964), especially pp.127-131, 172-174.
98. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, pp.308-325.
99. Ibid., vol.III, pp.409-410. A Vietnamese version of these replies were published in Nhan Dan (No.152), 6-10 December 1953), with a commentary designed to maintain the militant spirit of the people. When the article was reprinted in Cuoc Khang chien than thanh (Hanoi, 1960), (Vol.IV, pp.149-152), the editors identified the Swedish correspondent as "Nicov, editor of the Expressen, a Swedish newspaper",
100. Ibid., p.430.
101. Ibid., pp.438-441.
102. Ibid., pp.444-445.
103. For more details, see Devillers & Lacouture, Viet Nam, de la guerre française à la guerre américaine (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1969, especially pp.310-311.
104. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.IV, p.18.
Italics added.
105. Nhan Dan, No.209 (28-30 July 1954), editorial
Cf. Nhan Dan, No.208, on the Sixth Conference of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party; Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III.
p.444.
106. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol.III, p.325.
Italics added.
Cf. Id. vol.IV, p.450: Leninism... is also the radiant sun illuminating our path to final victory, to Socialism and Communism. (Ho's

article published in the Soviet review, Problems of the East). See also Ho's article in Pravda, on 18 April 1955: "... From the powerful Leninist doctrine, we draw a great strength to fulfill our sacred task of securing peace, reunification, independence, and democracy and to win victory for socialism (Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works vol.IV, p.80).

107. See the address of Ho Chi Minh at the closing ceremony of the Congress of the Fatherland Front (September 1955) in Ho Chi Minh, Mien Nam là ruột thịt, Nam Bắc là một nhà. (Hanoi: Su That, 1960), p.34.

Chapter VIII

An Evaluation.

The Viet Minh movement remained unknown to most Vietnamese, until the moment its cadres appeared with their red and gold flags to organise huge rallies in Hanoi, Hue, Saigon and all other cities and towns in the second half of August 1945. Within a short period, the Viet Minh Front had succeeded in seizing power in North and Central Viet Nam, in proclaiming national independence (2 September 1945), and in establishing a provisional government in Hanoi and a new system of local administration throughout the major part of Viet Nam. While resistance was being organised against the French forces in the South, a general election was called throughout the whole of Viet Nam to elect a National Assembly. This body ratified a democratic Constitution prepared in advance by the Viet Minh and gave official approval to successive central governments dominated by the Viet Minh and led by Ho Chi Minh.

The following months witnessed complicated political and diplomatic manoeuvres which brought about the withdrawal of the Nationalist Chinese troops from Viet Nam, preliminary agreements with the French Government, negotiation in Paris on Viet-French relations, Ho Chi Minh's state visit to France, and the Modus Vivendi of 14 September 1946.

Only three months later, the Ho Chi Minh Government had to leave Hanoi for the jungle to wage the national

war of resistance against the French. While conducting guerilla warfare, the Viet Minh built up its strength with an ever growing "people's army", merged into the Lien Việt (National United Front of Viet Nam), and later "associated itself" with Đảng Lao động (the Viet Nam Workers' Party), to consolidate the "people's leading power", push forward the resistance war to victory, and pave the road to socialism.

Undoubtedly, the Viet Minh story is one of startling success, made possible by the immense strength which resulted from unifying the whole people. The essential element of that success was the winning of the devoted support of the entire Vietnamese people. To understand how this was achieved, it is necessary not only to study the Viet Minh literature of political persuasion but also briefly to analyze the persuaders and their target, i.e., the minds of the Vietnamese people in the 1940's.

A. THE TARGET GROUP

The basic requirement for the success of persuasive communication is to adjust the message to the emotional and motivational characters of the target group. Now, these characters are determined by the cultural values, attitudes and social norms of the group, as well as by their prevailing needs, aspirations, frustrations and anxieties. These determinants can be identified by a careful study of the social, political, economic, and psychological contexts, in the 1940's, of the people to be persuaded.

As has been shown in the first chapter, endowed with a strong sense of national consciousness, the Vietnamese people have always cherished their perennial tradition of heroic struggle and amazing success against their foreign enemies. With understandable pride they loved to reaffirm the authority of their "four thousand years of civilisation", to recall their national heroes such as Trần Hưng Đạo, Lê Lợi, Nguyễn Huệ ...only to conclude with Nguyễn Trãi:

Tuy mạnh yếu có lúc khác nhau,
Mà hào kiệt không bao giờ thiếu.

Though we have been now strong,
now weak,
At no time have we lacked heroes.

Most appreciated among the values of their national heritage were family and religion, with the fatherland considered as a union of families under the king who, by the mandate of Heaven, had the duty of caring for all families with justice and benevolence.

Imbued with the Confucian doctrine, the Vietnamese identified social and political norms with ethics. Hence, all moral virtues, for a Vietnamese traditionalist, were based on the two cardinal virtues: Hiếu or filial piety, and Trung or loyalty to the sovereign. The basic social practice was, therefore, a deep respect for authority: authority of father, uncle, elder, teacher, and ruler. Consequently, people in general were patient, withdrawn, reticent and conformed to a very high degree with the authoritative traditions and any establishment, educational, religious, social

or political. This generally submissive attitude admitted only one exception, the right of revolution, which was permissible according to the teaching of Mencius, when an unjust ruler flagrantly violated the rights of the people. In such a case, assassination and other brutal forms of punishment were justified by the hatred of the people for the culprit, and were even considered admirable when performed by a brave reformer or national hero.

To these old traditional beliefs were added in the 20th century, new ideas and values which the younger generation had learned from modern French writers such as J.J. Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Robespierre, and the like. The new class of bourgeois intellectuals described previously in Chapter II, were sensitive to the new watch-words Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, and because of their acquaintance with democracy as practiced in France, nurtured a deeper resentment against the French colonial administration than did other less privileged Vietnamese. These frustrated men were generally very able and were eager, not only to join, but also to lead any revolutionary movement demanding independence for the country and freedom for the people.

The economic situation was deplorable, the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese people being poor peasants subject to oppression and social injustice. Their prevailing needs were "more food, more education, less tax". The better educated people too were discontented because of the widening gap between the

rewards they received and those of similarly qualified Frenchmen.

Thus, national and international political events, economic as well as socio-cultural contexts, all converged to fashion a Vietnamese mentality of high aspirations, frustrations, anxieties, and insecurity. The situation became highly charged when a whole generation grew up in frustration and confusion without a strong leader. People were, indeed, longing for a national hero while a potential revolutionary situation awaited only a tiny political spark to detonate an explosion which would engulf the whole country and people. If a persuader could select and formulate the appropriate issues, adjust his message to the emotional and motivational climate surrounding the people, and employ the right approach to gain the attention, arouse the enthusiasm, and maintain the determination and dedication of the people, he could channel all the prevailing tensions into an irreversible flood which would sweep away the existing political structure.

B. THE PERSUADER.

The success of propaganda or agitation unquestionably depends to a large extent, upon the competence, the prestige, the skills, and the moral virtues (probity, disinterest, kindness, benevolence, courage) of the persuader.

The most famous propagandist and agitator in Viet Nam during the early 1940's was the Viet Minh, a name attractive to Vietnamese ears, but the name of an

organisation, not an individual. Viet Minh was the title of a national united Front, a patriotic league for the Independence of Viet Nam. These objectives identified it with the voice of the Sacred Fatherland, so that it commanded the respect and the allegiance of the Vietnamese people, who had always revered heroic patriotism as part of their national tradition.

The authority of this patriotic Front was further enhanced when it was commended to the Vietnamese people by the prestigious Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen, the Patriot) in his "Letter from Abroad", and his "Appeal for General Insurrection". These two documents, authoritative and seemingly well informed, deeply impressed the Vietnamese people who were still in the state of confusion and enforced ignorance concerning events in the outside world, resulting from the isolation of Viet Nam during World War II. In origin, Nguyen Ai Quoc was not a personal name, but an expedient pen name coined by the highly respected revolutionary leader Phan Châu Trinh,¹ on the occasion of signing a Vietnamese petition to the Versailles Conference in 1919. During the intervening years it had acquired the status of a national myth, a symbol of Vietnamese patriotism, the common voice expressing the deepest aspirations of a nation which had lost its independence and national identity when it was absorbed into what the French conquerors called "French Indochina".

But, if the name Nguyen Ai Quoc lent prestige to the Viet Minh, it also aroused popular suspicion, fear, and resentment in 1945, since the name had formerly

been identified with the Indochinese Communist Party and the Nghe Tinh Soviet movement in 1930-31.

On the eve of his public appearance as the President of the newly born Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the resourceful leader of the Viet Minh, therefore, shrewdly decided to shed that "patriotic name". The new name which the Viet Minh leader adopted in August 1945 was itself an inspired choice. The period was indeed one of confusion and unrest, and Vietnamese people longed for enlightened guidance and a strong leader: the name Ho Chi Minh (Ho, the most enlightened) tacitly answered the aspirations of the people and won much respect and confidence while avoiding the divisive issue of Communism.

From the very first day, the "enlightened leader" consistently refused to show himself as a majestic ruler, an authoritarian president, or even a "dignified" statesman, but chose rather to stress the simple, grass-roots qualities of a selfless man who was a member of the common people, not unlike an able peasant leader from the Nghe Tinh area. Presiding at the Independence ceremony on 2 September 1945, the new president Ho wore a shabby khaki uniform and simple slippers. In the midst of the solemn Proclamation of Independence, Ho surprised the audience by inserting a homely acoustic testing of the microphone: "Do you hear me clearly, fellow compatriots?"

Thereafter, President Ho always presented himself in his simplest garb, spoke the language of the ordinary Vietnamese, often inserted a few familiar verses into his speeches, and advised his cadres to observe

the "mass lines", that is to say, to remain close to the masses of people. Consequently, the ordinary Vietnamese working man could easily identify with his simple and benign leader, be proud of him, readily espouse his cause, and happily make Ho's political lines his own. In the early period, "the most enlightened" Ho did not reveal himself as a Marxist, a politician, or a constant persuader. The elderly Ho with his grey beard, which traditionally symbolizes "experience, wisdom, and benevolence" in Vietnamese society, succeeded in projecting himself as a Confucian gentleman who would rule the new republic by moral virtues, and, as the father of all families, care for all his compatriots.

Only a few days after the Proclamation of national Independence, President Ho wrote an affectionate letter to the children to wish them a Happy August Moon celebration, depicting himself as their "benign Uncle (Bác) who loved them dearly". Naturally a person who cherished the children must be highly esteemed by their parents and relatives. From that moment on, "Bác Hồ" became his endearing title, which expressed his characteristic relationship and implied a high level of respect and affection from his people and total devotedness from the fatherly president.

His quality as a successful persuader, as well as the basic approach he recommended in the work of agitation, are well summarized by Ho's "principle of affection".:

Đi dân nhỏ, ở dân thường

See to it that your close relationship with the people would make your stay most appreciated and your departure deeply regretted.

To this end, using both Confucian and Christian terms, the gentleman Ho urged the practice of revolutionary virtues and emphasized the attraction of good example:

Our local committees must master the effective practice of propaganda and explanation..., and possess sufficient initiative to be efficient without hurting the feelings of the people. With regard to Industry, Economy, Sacrifice, and Justice, our people's committees must be the first ones to practice these in order to set good example for the people. 2

Good example in the practice of revolutionary virtues, was set by Ho above all others. All Vietnamese revolutionary cadres have studied Ho's manual of revolutionary ethics (Sửa đổi lối làm việc i.e., Let us change our style of work) and could find no better example than Ho himself.

Small wonder that from the very beginning of his presidential career, a movement was set afoot to make Ho Chi Minh a "superman". While his origin and identity were subjects of a guessing game, exciting rumours were freely circulated to emphasize his extraordinary physionomy (large ears, immense forehead, piercing eyes),

and the "miraculous phenomenon" of double pupil in each eye as recorded in President Ho's photograph (see the reflection of two illuminating lamps in the inserted picture: Ho Chi Minh in 1945).

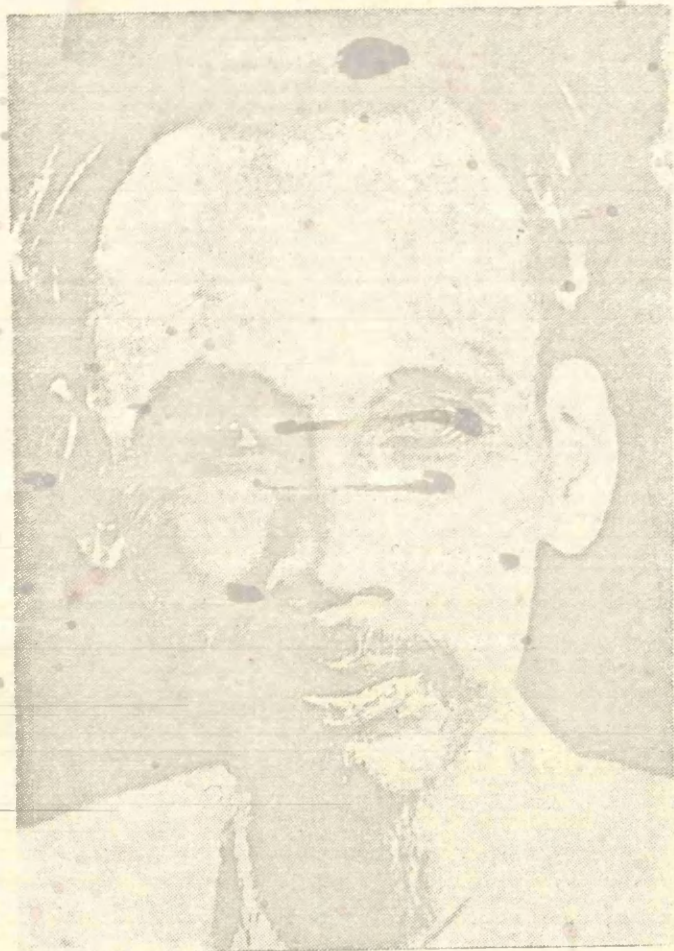
Suddenly Ho Chi Minh posters of all sizes appeared in offices, buildings, market places, along the streets, in private homes, everywhere, and seemingly gave people the impression that Ho, the superman, was almighty and ubiquitous. A competition in displaying Ho's images was further encouraged by public notices in the Viet Minh newspapers such as the following:

Photographs of President Ho are available at the minimum of 500 đồng each. 3 Statues of President Ho are available at the Social Welfare Department (26 Ly Thuong Kiet Street) in two models:
for desk: 46 đồng each
for wall: 36 đồng each. 4

Together with those venerable pictures and statues, was sold a revolutionary ideology which was reincarnated in the person of a Confucian gentleman.

Just as incense and prayers are offered in honour of a new hero or messiah, so exciting songs were taught to children:

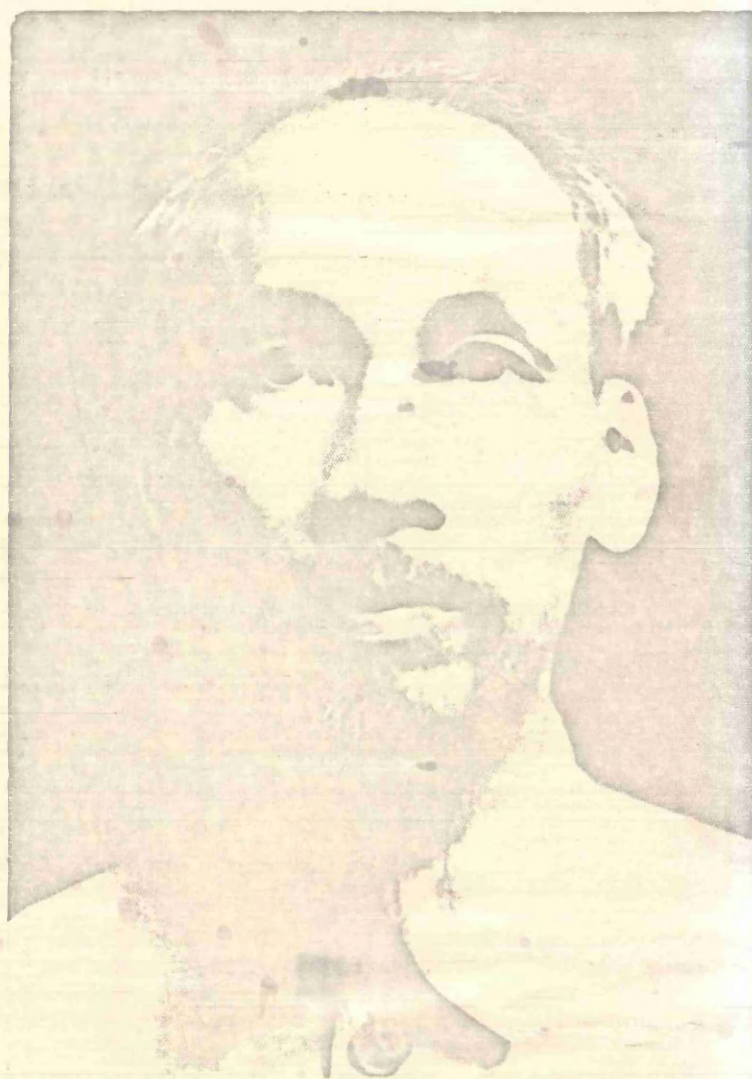
Ai yêu Bác Hồ Chí Minh bằng chúng em
nhí đồng,
...Bác chúng em nước da nâu vì sừng
gió,
Bác chúng em thể cường quyết trả thù
nhà



CHỦ TỊCH NƯỚC VIỆT NAM DÂN CHỦ CỘNG HÒA

HỒ CHI MINH

1945



CHỦ TỊCH NƯỚC VIỆT NAM DÂN CHỦ CỘNG HÒA

HỒ CHI MINH

1955

Whose love for Uncle Ho can be
 compared to our love?
 ...Our Uncle has been tanned with
 enduring misery
 Our Uncle has vowed to cleanse the
 nation from shame.

Later, another song was to be sung, immediately
 after the national anthem:

...Ho Chi Minh muôn năm!
 Ho Chi Minh muôn năm!
 Người soi đu^oc sáng khắp
 n^uớc Nam...
 Làm cho n^uớc Vi^êt Nam quang vinh.

...Long live Ho Chi Minh!
 Long live Ho Chi Minh!
 He is the light of the whole
 nation...
 Making Viet Nam a glorious country.

Before President Ho officially proclaimed the
 patriotic emulation campaign, poets already competed
 with musicians in promoting the canonization of the
 national hero Ho Chi Minh:

His voice makes several capital
 cities tremble;
 His steps shake the whole universe.

 With a heart as immense as the love
 of Buddha,
 He is an angel enlightening our way,
 And leading us to the liberation road.

 Ho Chi Minh, you are a living Saint!''⁵

Thus a new prophet was annointed to preach the
 conversion of Vietnamese hearts.

Traditional beliefs require Vietnamese homes to

have an altar for the cult of ancestors which expresses both family and religious sentiments. The official Viet Minh policy in 1945 did not advocate the tam vô (the three without's: without family, without fatherland, without religion) as did the Soviet movement in 1930-31, but a sophisticated process of substitution was quietly at work. The pictures of the fatherly Ho displayed on ancestral altars or places of honour were tacitly claiming affection and respect from the people. Furthermore, as Bác Hồ loved to say: "Viet Nam is a greater family of mine", the traditional loyalty to the sovereign was destined for the "beloved President" in whom was embodied the authority of the Fatherland. Thus, the Confucian basic virtues of Hiếu (filial piety) and Trung (loyalty to the sovereign or Fatherland) were preserved in their traditional forms but progressively changed in content. After the emergence of the "patriotic Party" (i.e., the Indochinese Communist Party) under the new name of Viet Nam Workers' Party, to be welcomed by the Lien Viet (United Viet Nam) National Front which was to become later the Fatherland Front, the fundamental virtues Hiếu and Trung were converted into a new basic slogan:

Hiếu với Dân, Trung với Đảng
 Filial piety toward the People
 (i.e., the Proletariat), and
 Loyalty to the (Communist)
 Party.

It is a great irony that the father of the Indochinese Communist Party succeeded in establishing

himself as the father of the Vietnamese nation which, fifteen years earlier, had stubbornly refused to accept the Soviet Internationalism introduced by him. A step further, while lavishing his "nationalist care" on the infant Democratic Republic to preserve its Independence and Freedom, the gentle *Bác Hồ* quietly but resolutely led the country along the road to socialism-communism.

The secret of his success lies fundamentally in his well-judged approach and brilliant performance as leader and persuader. Even though he was a thorough Marxist-Leninist and a tough revolutionary leader, the "most enlightened" Ho also mastered the art of converting the traditional teachings and the predominant Confucian mentality to the advantage of his work of political persuasion. Ho Chi Minh, the persuader, excelled over many others in the art of "selling the new wine of Marxist revolution in old Confucian bottles".

The traditional Vietnamese society always attached the greatest importance to morals, emphasized individual duties, and required kindness and harmony in all social relationships. The "most enlightened" Ho who had received a thorough Confucian upbringing in his early days, spared no efforts to present himself at first, not as a radical revolutionary but rather as a Confucian "superman", very gentle and kindly toward everybody, in every situation, despising wordly honours and material possessions, and completely dedicated to the just cause of defending the Fatherland and serving the people.

Since the majority of the people were simple and poor peasants, the "plain-folk" approach and the austere life of the respectable president Ho, together with his explicit concern about the living conditions of the ordinary people, effectively convinced the Vietnamese that Ho was the man "from the people, of the people, and for the people".

On the other hand, the mass movement needed agitators and leaders. Ho's strong criticism of the French colonial administration, his long training in abroad, his kindliness and charisma proved irresistible to the educated Vietnamese who had been dismayed by numerous social ills and wrongs, resentful against the French, and enthusiastic for change. These zealous converts were good recruits for the Viet Minh regiment of persuaders which already had been staffed by Ho's able and dedicated disciple-comrades, such as Truong-Chinh, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap. With the full co-operation of his convinced and determined cadres, Ho's magnetic personality and inspiring work-style deeply impressed people of all social strata, and powerfully incited the masses to rise and to go through fire and water with their beloved leader.

C. THE MESSAGE.

It is clear that, since 1945, the opinions and attitudes of the Vietnamese people have been changed radically by the well organised Communist Party. The Party's principal tool was a persuasive message. The effectiveness of it's communication derived from

a methodical approach to the work of persuasion and the application of a number of highly efficient techniques.

I. An elaborate method.

As a result of their thorough training and their turbulent experience the Communist leaders consistently refused to take anything for granted. Consequently, their work, especially in the field of political persuasion, has always been extremely thorough and methodical. It is true that human affairs, unlike mechanical engineering, do not admit of a rigid pattern nor of an inflexible method capable of application to any situation. Nevertheless, the elaborate technique of persuasion employed in North Viet Nam can be summarized in five points: a lofty ideal, investigation and study, careful planning, thorough training, and a revolutionary work style, animated with revolutionary ethics.

1. A lofty ideal.

Like any reforming or revolutionary movement, be it political or religious, Communism in Viet Nam began with a noble ideal which was made to appear even more desirable by the moral decay, political oppression, economic exploitation, and other social ills obtaining at the time.

Vietnamese society of the 1940's was marked by suffering, resentment, frustration, and unrest. When the Viet Minh (i.e., the patriotic front led by the Communists) leaders proclaimed the ideal of "Change the world, build a better society", they expressed exactly a longing many Vietnamese people had cherished in their hearts.

The idealistic aims of the movement^{were} methodically determined so that they accorded closely with the aspirations of the people and the prevailing needs of individual periods.

Thus, political persuasion concentrated on different themes in different phases of the revolution, as has been demonstrated in the foregoing chapters: Doc-lap, Tu-do, Hạnh-phúc (Independence, Freedom, Happiness), Chống Pháp, Kháng Nhật (Fight the French, Oppose the Japanese), Đoàn kết, Cứu nước (Unite to save the country), Kháng Chiến, Kiến Quốc (Total Resistance, Nation Building), Hòa bình, Dân chủ (Peace and Democracy)...

The ideal served, indeed, as a magnet to attract many Vietnamese of conscience, especially the young, who dreamed of better worlds, and those who were eager to work for social justice, for less suffering and more happiness in society. In the name of this high ideal, the Communists made challenging demands. Thus, the revolutionary ideal represented a just cause for which to live and to fight, and inspired those enthusiasts who joined the movement with the willingness to sacrifice their money, time, everything, even life itself.

This spirit of devotion was further intensified by the shining examples set by President Ho and his cadres, by the hardships endured during the resistance war, and no less by the patriotic emulation campaign which created many envied heroes throughout the country.

In the beginning, enthusiasm was rare because most people were not prepared to plunge themselves into a hard struggle, sacrificing their own interests and what-

ever they had acquired for themselves and their families. Cleverly, the Communists presented a vivid picture of the idealistic world of Doc lap, Tu do, Hanh phuc (Independence, Freedom, Happiness) which stood in sharp contrast to the cruel realities of foreign domination, oppression, and misery, which was everywhere apparent in the 1940's. Living in such circumstances, the discontented people found a deep meaning in the paraphrased words of Marx's manifesto: "You have nothing to lose but your chains, and yet a whole world to win". To the better educated, the Communist leaders offered an appropriate challenge: "Others have only tried to explain the world, your duty, however, is to change it".

"To change the world of exploitation, and misery into a world of equality, justice, co-operation and happiness", this lofty ideal was the soul of the Viet Minh movement and the dynamic source of life, growth, and strength for the Indochinese Communist Party in whatever form it emerged or submerged.

2. Investigation and Study (Điều Nghiên)

For a well trained Communist, investigation is the first step in determining future plans or deciding what action to take. The more complete and careful the preliminary investigation, the more favourable and successful will the revolutionary work be.

Any agit-prop agent assigned to a locality must first conduct a thorough investigation of the enemy's situation (administration, military forces, political

parties, associations, policies, programmes, internal conflicts), of the situation of the local people (the living conditions of different classes, their attitudes, tendencies, actions and aspirations; the different religions, their organisations, activities, leaders...), and of those persons who might eventually serve as "bases of the movement" (Communist local agents).

Instead of performing a cursory survey, the investigator was required to obtain concrete details of each organisation, each group, each family, and each person.⁶ In a hamlet, he must compile a list of "good", indifferent, backward, and "bad" elements", record the activities and attitudes of each category and each individual. In August 1945, the Viet Minh cadres in Hue possessed numerous note-cards listing high officials and civil servants with detailed information about such matters as the number of wives, concubines, girl friends with their respective addresses. In February 1968, during the Tet offensive in Hue, again, the Communist officers operated a house to house search with "wanted lists" in their hands.

In the investigation of a person who might be susceptible to conversion into what the Communists termed a "base", the "Guidebook of Mass-agitation" required meticulous information on every single aspect of the potential candidate:

- His social class, family, relatives, friends, religion;
- His educational level, profession, abilities, financial situation;

- His hobbies, habits, weaknesses such as gambling, drinking, courting women;
- His relationship and attitude toward "the enemy": support or opposition, fear or defiance, to what degree?
- His participation in revolutionary activities in the past; his present attitude to the masses and the revolution, his spirit of struggle... 7

The Tuyên-Huân (Propaganda - Education) Department of the Party also provided practical instructions concerning the direct and indirect means of approach, the methods, and the techniques of investigation.

In a direct investigation by personal contact, for example, the cadre was advised firstly to make acquaintances and friends by social contacts, business contacts, home visits, in recreation or mutual services. Only later would he gradually develop a more intimate relationship, injecting suggestions at opportune moments in their private conversations. Before suggesting any question or topic, so the investigator was instructed, he must begin with informal and friendly conversations concerning the daily life, work or business of the target, then carry on to progress from trivialities to politics, from remote to the more relevant topics, and finally guide the conversation towards the question under investigation. The cadre was cautioned against arousing suspicion by posing repeated questions, and advised to continue the conversation in a natural way so that his companion would remain unaware of the investigation being made.

When contacting manual workers, the method of Gọi khổ, kể khổ (recalling miseries, narrating miseries) was recommended as an excellent means of agitation and the most fruitful method of investigation. Actually this method of gọi khổ was one of the principal features in the preparatory campaign for the land reform which commenced in 1953: the cadres went from home to home for thăm nghèo hỏi khổ (visiting the poor, inquiring about miseries) then gọi khổ, gây hờn (recalling miseries, spurring hatred).

The age-old principle that "like attracts like" was also applied in the Communist art of investigation. People having something in common, whether living conditions, social position, religion, or political leanings, people working together "for the enemy", belonging to the same "enemy-controlled organisation", or being mutual friends, naturally tended to confide private matters or personal aspirations to one another with much more ease. Therefore, Communist cadres were exhorted to spare no efforts in establishing "bases" within each social class, religious denomination and enemy-controlled organisation. Those "bases" i.e., planted agents, were greatly appreciated by the Party for the invaluable help they offered in furthering investigations among rich men, bourgeois, landlords, and the non-communist institutions.

Cadres were also urged to achieve adequate investigation not simply by listening to the words of others but also by observing their attitudes and actions. ⁸

The Communist leaders rightly emphasized the importance and the methodical rigour of investigation, because other procedures or plans necessarily depended upon the results of investigation, which served as their starting point. The next step, which received no less attention, was study.

The necessity of study was emphasized in North Viet Nam by two famous slogans, one from Lenin and the other from Confucius:

Study, study more, study unceasingly.

Study ceaselessly, Teach tirelessly.

The study sessions too, were organised methodically, employing a "realistic approach" which portrayed a global struggle taking place in a decisive period between capitalism, colonialism, imperialism or selfishness, on the one hand, and the poor workers, colonised, oppressed but heroically fighting for their human rights and their happiness on the other. The presentation was deliberately calculated to spur moral indignation and to inspire all Communist Party members, and above all the cadres, with an iron determination to engage themselves in a great crusade on the side of good and against evil. Linking knowledge with action, Marxism - Leninism was offered as a science, tested and confirmed by contemporary history, as a source of light, of strength, and of hope, ensuring final victory over the evil forces, and guiding the people in the large, powerful Democratic camp to peace and happiness.

The one-sided imparting of information in an environment isolated from the outside world, the dedi-

cation of the tutors, and other powerful techniques, all contributed to instil into the Communist Party members and its supporters deep convictions which prompted them to respond heroically to the heavy demands of the Party and further to disseminate the ideas they had learned to imbue other compatriots with [their own convictions].

3. Careful Planning.

The results of thorough investigations, submitted to a dialectic materialist interpretation under the light of Marxism-Leninism led the Communist cadres on to careful pre-planning before undertaking any action.

In planning, they examined the objective and subjective conditions, considered the situation of the world, of their own country, and of the local area, distinguished foes from friends, carefully weighed their own abilities against the opposing forces and calculated the eventual reactions to be expected from others.

In the work of persuasion, the cadres discussed their themes at length among themselves, selected appropriate issues, anticipated possible arguments or objections, prepared counter-arguments and answers, against the background of information already obtained by investigation and study.

The manoeuvres to secure the abdication of Bao Dai, the feverish preparations to seize power after the Japanese surrender and before the arrival of the Allied forces, the "dissolution" of the Indochinese Communist

Party, the formation of several "governments of national unity" and several "national united fronts", the negotiations and agreements with the Chinese nationalist forces and the French Government in accordance with the Hòa để tiến (conciliation for future advance) tactic, the Kháng Chiến Kiến Quốc (Total resistance and Nation-building) programme coupled with the consolidation of the People's Government, all were effective results of the Communist methodical planning.

An outstanding illustration of minutely detailed and skilful planning was given in the propaganda campaign (1-30 May 1951) for the introduction of the newly formed Workers' Party to the people and an explanation of its name. To ensure success of the campaign, on 10 April 1951, the Propaganda Service of Ha Dong province issued a pamphlet giving clear and specific instructions to party cells at village level. The pamphlet contained a "general guide", and introduction, two sets of advice for "Propaganda within the Party", and "Propaganda among the People", a list of "Particular Points to be emphasized in Propaganda", and a well prepared catechism giving specimen answers to anticipated questions. Not neglecting the post-campaign period, the provincial Committee offered at the end a "Programme to be followed after the purpose and policy of the Party had been explained".

In the Propaganda among the people, the cadres were instructed to explain the primary purpose of the Party as "to unify the nation, to lead the Resistance to a final conclusion, and to work for the interest of

all". To eliminate any possible objection from the more sensitive elements of the population, five "more specific aims" were listed, including "assistance to intellectuals", "encouragement of private enterprise" and "freedom of conscience". To avoid the danger of unsuccessful confrontation, cadres were advised against conducting oral propaganda among property owners, intellectuals, and Catholics. For these elements, provincial headquarters provided "carefully prepared and printed documents and pamphlets", and party members had "carefully to follow the programme of distribution".

Practical hints such as "Strive to obtain popular acclamation of the Party" and "attribute all military successes to the work of the Party", were given to help demonstrate that the Party was "the most patriotic party", "most firmly resolved to lead the Resistance to final victory".

When arranging propaganda meetings, cadres were to bear in mind no less than six memoranda, including a highly politic one; "Send a telegram expressing the meeting's support for the Party". The thoroughness of planning was apparent, not only in the preparation of cadres, but also in the selection and accommodation of the audience:

The audience should be carefully selected - children who may disturb the discipline of the meeting should be refused admission. The proportion of Party to non-party members should be one to three. 9

For the post-campaign "follow up", it was recommended "to arrange for repeated demonstrations of popular acclamation for the Party".

Concerning the subtle relationship between the Viet Nam Workers' Party and the Indochinese Communist Party, the Party Central Committee Secretariat offered a general but no less subtle guideline:

If someone asks you about the difference between the Workers' Party and the Communist Party, you will answer: "The Workers' Party continues the work of the Communist Party." To our particularly reliable sympathizers, you may say the Workers' Party is the Communist Party. Towards those who deliberately assert that the Workers' Party is the Communist Party, you must observe a very prudent attitude. 10

After digesting the Party Central Committee's directive, the Ha Dong Propaganda Office formulated a very clever answer to be used in the Propaganda among the People:

The Workers' Party inherits the achievements of the parties which preceded it, including those of the Communist Party. There is nothing contradictory to Communism in the programme of the Workers' Party but it is not altogether Communist. The Communist Party is a party for Indochina while the Workers' Party is a party for Viet Nam. The Programme of the Communist Party is Communism while the programme of the Workers' Party is Popular Democratic Socialism. 11

Such a sophisticated reply, well-prepared in advance, was the result of a long and arduous mental distillation or thorough planning, which constituted the hallmark of Communist leadership, and a decisive element leading to Communist success.

4. Thorough Training.

In May 1935, while Ho Chi Minh, under the name of Liu, was studying the art of revolution in Moscow, Stalin launched the slogan "Cadres decide everything". Some ten years later, Ho Chi Minh incorporated Stalin's slogan in his Manual for training cadres ¹² and forcefully explained the great importance of this work as a decisive element of the growth of Communism:

Cadres are the ones who explain the policies of the organisation (i.e., the Communist Party) and the Government to make the people understand and implement them. At the same time, cadres are the ones who report the situation of the people to the organisation and the Government to help drafting correct policies.

Hence, cadres are basic to everything and the training of cadres is the basic work of the organization. ¹³

Communist training in North Viet Nam, as expounded by Ho, covered four fields:

- a) Cultural instruction i.e., the kind of normal education given in ordinary schools.
- b) Specialized instruction related to the type of work to be assigned to the cadre - administrative, Military, financial, educational, medical, propaganda etc.

- c) Political instruction: analysis of news and events; study of resolutions, programmes, and declarations issued by the organisation (i.e., Party) and the Government. The cadres in charge of propaganda and organisation were expected to receive fuller political instruction than cadres in other fields.
- d) Marxist-Leninist dialectic applied to Vietnamese realities.

This kind of thorough training was intended to inculcate into the cadres deep intellectual and moral convictions, to inspire them with a sense of purpose, determination, and faith in final victory, to equip them with efficient methods, techniques, and moral qualities so that they might become Marxist revolutionary leaders i.e., "men of special mould".

With such well trained cadres and a highly effective "policy of cadres",¹⁴ the Communists considered their problem of mass-agitation basically solved, which claim contemporary events in Viet Nam seem^mingly proved correct.

5. Revolutionary Ethics and Style in Work.

In his lectures delivered at the Sverdlov University in 1924, Stalin described the Leninist style in work as having two specific features.

- a) Russian revolutionary sweep i.e., "the life-giving force which stimulates thought, impels things forward, breaks the past and opens up new perspectives";
- b) American efficiency i.e., "that indomitable force which neither knows nor recognizes obstacles;... which

continues at a task once started until it is finished".¹⁵

Ho Chi Minh, a graduate of Lenin University, found both of these indispensable features in the history of the Vietnamese people, whom he proudly described as "an indomitable people", "a heroic people".

The revolutionary style in work which Ho advocated, may best be described by the principle: "From the people and to the people". Formulation came from Mao Tse-tung but its application in Viet Nam was entirely the work of Ho Chi Minh; Communist cadres were trained to live and to work among the people as "fishes in the stream". This simile became a cliché, but its content remained an inexhaustible source of inspiration for revolutionary cadres, and proved to be the key to Communist success.

Scarcely less important than Revolutionary style in work, was a second element, Revolutionary Ethics.

Before 1945, anti-communist literature had frequently depicted Communism to the Vietnamese people as an immoral doctrine. Most Vietnamese appeared readily to have accepted this description, especially since the nightmare of the Nghe Tinh Soviet, which had become popularly known as "the Red Terror of 1930-31".

However, the Viet Minh movement in 1945-46 made no mention of Communism but stressed only patriotism. Ho Chi Minh, the respectable Viet Minh leader, on the other hand, seemed to be obsessed by the idea of Revolutionary Ethics. His innumerable letters and speeches, especially his "Letter to the Comrades in Bac Bo" and his

booklet "Let us change the style of work", never failed to appeal to the moral sense of the people. The Confucian virtues highly esteemed by the Vietnamese were cited, explained, and urged on them at every possible occasion. The terms Chí công vô tử (Justice to the highest degree), Cần, Kiệm, Liêm, Chính (Industriousness, Economy, Honesty, Righteousness), Thành ý, chính tâm (Right the heart, correct the mind) were re-interpreted, given a revolutionary content with a Marxist direction, and presented as Revolutionary Ethics to the disconcerted Vietnamese public.

II. Efficient Techniques.

To make the revolutionary message more attractive, more acceptable to the Vietnamese people, the Communist cadres resorted to very large numbers of techniques of persuasion. To list all these here would be impractical, but all the techniques were merely variations of the following ten basic ones.

1. Raising banners

Recognizing the idealism which exists in the heart of every man, the Communist leaders went to extreme lengths to appeal to the noble sentiments of Humanity, Patriotism, Godliness, Fraternity, and the like. Consequently, messages of persuasion never failed to include "glittering generalities" such as Độc lập, Tự do, Hạnh phúc (Independence, Freedom, Happiness), Đoàn kết (Union), Dân chủ (Democracy), Thống nhất (Unification), Hòa bình (Peace).... Ho Chi Minh's Appeal for general insurrection" (August 1945) and "Declaration of Independence" (2 September 1945), for example, repeated the terms Independence and Freedom, some 30 times.

The revolutionary leaders endeavoured to express the deep aspirations of the people and depicted themselves as the true champions of the people's rights and interests. This gave the people a just cause for which to fight and a strong motivation to join the battle already started by those "self-sacrificing leaders".

This technique demanded the abundant use of slogans, posters, pictures, streamers, signboards or positive symbols of all kinds, - on the eve of the 1973 ceasefire in South Viet Nam this phenomenon was termed by foreign journalists "the battle of the flags".

2. Emotional arousal.

In their everyday lives, men tend to be motivated more frequently by emotional rather than national stimuli. If it is to be effective, propaganda must win control of the feelings and emotions of the target group especially when it is applied to the masses. Hence, name-calling abounded in the literature of political persuasion, as has been shown in earlier chapters: colonialist, fascist, invader, imperialist, feudalism, reactionary, Viet gian (Viet traitor), counter-revolutionary, and many other emotive terms designed to arouse anger, protest, opposition, and a fighting spirit.

This is the reason why such language was used to portray the global struggle between the "loving-peace Democratic Camp" (Communist) and the "war-like Imperialist aggressors" (non-Communist), between the "patriotic, progressive elements" (Viet Minh) and the "traitorous, reactionary lackeys" (anti-communist Vietnamese). In

his speech delivered during the first days of the resistance war in South Viet Nam (November 1945), and in his "message to the Vietnamese people, the French people, and the people of the Allied Nations" during the first days of the nation-wide war (December 1946), Ho Chi Minh employed terms of abuse to refer to the French, no fewer than thirty and forty^{times} respectively. Nevertheless, during the conciliation period (Hòa dề tiên), Ho's reply to Prime Minister Bidault in Paris (2 July 1946) and his proclamation to the people upon return from France after negotiations (23 October 1946) lavished on the French unrestrained praise and employed friendly terminology: "Paris, a heroic and generous city"; French Union, "humanitarian organisation", "sincerity and mutual confidence", "sincere friendship", "friendly manner", "peaceful atmosphere"...

This technique underlay the depiction of invasion threats, blockade, "indiscriminate destruction", "mass killing", and other allegations against "the enemies and their lackeys." (See for examples: Truong Chinh, The Resistance will win, p.44; Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol.III, p.284). Recommended as one of the most effective means of persuasion (Rf. Công tác quân chúng, Vol.I, p.11), this technique produced an intensive campaign of hatred against the French (Su That, No.72, 25 March 1947), and against the landowners (Nhan Dan, No.118, 16-20 June 1953).

3. Challenge and Competition.

The Communists undertook their self-appointed task in an unpromising and difficult situation. The

following year (1946), their circumstances seemed to be desperate and many Vietnamese nationalists were convinced that Communist failure was imminent. Under the banner of the just cause, the Communists addressed a challenge to every Vietnamese citizen and encountered a generous response.

The war against the French troops appeared to be a "mission impossible", but, imbued with the lofty ideal of cuu quoc (national salvation) and encouraged by the extraordinary examples of their national heroes in the past, the Vietnamese people responded to the exceedingly heavy demands in a way that outside observers find it difficult to understand. Natural resources and agricultural production were woefully inadequate in North Viet Nam, but throughout the nine years of war, people practised such industry and thrift that they continued to maintain a subsistence-level existence and thereby achieved self-sufficiency. Such outstanding achievements as these resulted from the technique of challenge and competition, which was cleverly applied in an endless succession of campaigns, military, economic and political as well. The powerful psychological motive force was justly named "Patriotic Emulation", and later reinforced by a whole regiment of contemporary heroes, champions or competition winners.

4. Popular approach.

The Communist leaders, from President Ho to the local cadres, were living a simple life, free of luxury and ostentation. In their efforts to maintain close and friendly relations with the masses, they went to

very great lengths to ascertain the interests of the people, speak their language, and act in the same way as they did.

The revolutionary message was presented in simple terms, under popular forms (folk-songs, popular rhymes, etc.), and very often in a casual way. Advising Communist members prudently to avoid overt boasting of their party membership, for example, a Party directive did not hesitate to employ a homely figure of speech: "President Ho is like a pregnant woman: he does not boast at all but everybody seeing him knows".

Moreover, the daily needs of the people were emphasized, and practical measures designed to help the people were brought home in the form of peasant-slogans: cơm no áo ấm (sufficient rice and clothing) ăn no đánh thắng (sufficient food, many victories), trồng cây, nuôi lợn (planting trees, rearing pigs), trừ ruồi, trừ chuột (eliminating flies and rats). This popular approach was warmly welcomed and proved to be highly effective, which in turn increased the people's faith in and loyalty to the Government.

5. Substitution.

Instead of abolishing traditional values, attacking religions, and rejecting the familiar ethical principles, the Communist cadres were trained to take advantage of traditional forms in order to exploit their revolutionary content.

Religions and family sentiments, the basic virtues of Hiếu (filial piety to parents) and Trung (loyalty to

the Fatherland), Confucian principles, and other traditions, were all reinterpreted so as to convey new meanings favouring the revolution (Rf. Ho Chi Minh, Tuyên Tập, p.305; Sửa đổi lối làm việc, p.36; Selected Works, Vol.IV, p.175).

Traditionally, the Vietnamese loved processions and the parade of colorful "five-element-banners" (cờ ngũ hành). After the 1945 power-seizure, they were replaced by political rallies and red flags with golden five-pointed stars. While Jesus Christ was praised as a first class revolutionary, ancestral tablets and holy pictures gave way to Uncle Ho's posters and busts. The term Dân (People) in Confucius and Mencius was still repeated, only to mean the proletariat. In the same vein, "People's Democracy" conveyed the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus, the technique of substitution, while fulfilling revolutionary purposes, helped the Government to avoid antagonism and resentment.

6. Isolation.

One way to foster the conversion of minds is to change the climate of opinion. To this end, the Communist authorities severed all communications with the outside world, restricted and controlled the movement of persons, confiscated all radio and electronic equipment, and monopolised news and information (Rf. Truong Chinh, The resistance will win, p.114). After thorough elimination of competitors, the one-way information system continued to make people more receptive to the official news, and conditioned them to applaud

whatever the "mighty and clear-sighted" Party had to declare in public.

If a little window was to be opened to a friendly diplomat, a sympathizing visitor, or a "progressive democratic" reporter, all safety measures were mobilized to ensure that a guided tour did not disturb the insulated sector of the population.

To such a fearful atmosphere were added some organised denunciations among the people to increase the bitterness of mutual mistrust and discourage any conspiracy, or even mutual consultation or the seeking of advice of any kind. The atmosphere of isolation was then used to foster "guided rumours" directed against those who refused to be persuaded.

On the other hand, after remaining in enforced ignorance of anything happening outside the confines of their villages for a period of time, the psychological resistance of the non-communist people was rapidly weakened and gave way to resignation and compromise.

Thus, isolation proved to be an effective catalyst for political persuasion.

7. Card-stacking.

This technique consists of selecting, distorting or falsifying facts and figures so that these appear to support the theme of the propagandist. A dialectical justification of card-stacking was adroitly suggested by Ho Chi Minh in his speech delivered to intellectuals attending the political course of the Viet Nam People's University (Hanoi):

Since our regime is a democratic one there should be freedom of thought. What is freedom? In all matters, everyone is free to express his own view, thereby contributing to the establishing of the truth...

After everyone's view has been expressed and truth has been established, freedom of thought turns into freedom to obey the truth.

Truth is what is beneficial to the Fatherland and to the people. What is detrimental to the interests of the Fatherland and people is not truth. To strive to serve the Fatherland and the people is to obey the truth. 16

Examples of card-stacking abounded in military and economic reports, the stories of labour and military heroes, the list of victories, successes and spoils. The "Resistance Calendar" (Cuộc Kháng Chiến Thần Thánh, Vol.I, p.317), for example, listed the "battle of Tan Dinh (Saigon)" with the "success of killing 200 French enemies", whereas French authorities bitterly protested against what they described as the abduction and killing of about 150 residents of the Herault Residential area in Tan Dinh on 24 September 1945. The list of military feats from 19 December 1946 to 21 July 1954 recorded 466,172 enemies killed, 255 canons seized, 435 airplanes destroyed (Cuộc Kháng Chiến Thần Thánh, Vol.IV, p.451). A young lady Truong thi Xin in Nghe An was crowned competition winner "for having changed her style of work and increased the production rate by 437%." The Viet Minh newspaper Tin Tuc (20 June 1952) reported that sixty French soldiers had

raped seven hundred women in one afternoon (sic) at My-Loc!

To make President Ho two years older, Hanoi asserted that Ho was born in 1890 (instead of 1892 which seems more accurate). To this end, writers had to falsify any figure having connection with Ho's birth date. ¹⁷

8. Band Wagon.

The ordinary people normally want to side with the majority for practical reasons. The "band wagon" technique consists in telling people that "everybody's doing it - better come along".

This psychological device was employed in Ho's appeals in 1941 (letter from abroad), and in 1945 (Appeal for general insurrection) with no small success. When the Viet Nam Workers' Party made its public appearance in a joint-meeting of Viet Minh - Lien Viet delegates, the arrangements were so organised as to give the impression that the Workers' Party was a "national party" being welcomed by the delegates of "the whole nation".

The Party directive concerning the explanation of the Viet Nam Workers' Party did not neglect this technique when it advised the Party cadres to "endeavour to obtain popular acclamation for the Party, and after propaganda meetings to send a telegram expressing the meeting's support for the Party". The shouting of

slogans, the applause or ovation given to the Party speakers and Uncle Ho at the end of every meeting, also illustrated the technique of Band Wagon and proved its practical effects at the same time.

9. Testimonial.

To give more prestige to the Party and Government, the Communist press cited the approval or supporting statements from public officials, senators, politicians, scientists, legal experts, religious leaders, and other prestigious personalities throughout the world.

On the one hand, the declaration of Ex-emperor Bao Dai made Supreme Counsellor of the Viet Minh Government, the letters of Ex-Queen Nam Phuong and the four Vietnamese Bishops in 1945 were shrewdly converted into powerful credentials for the Government of Ho Chi Minh which was hitherto unknown to the outside world.

On the other hand, during Ho's visit to France and the Viet-French negotiations at Fontainbleau, statements from French Communists and Socialists opposing the French Government were generously quoted in the Viet Minh press. During the time of war and the Geneva Conference period, the declarations from Moscow, Peking, the editorials of Pravda, People's Daily, Humanité, and any opinion favourable to the Communist Government, were cited and interpreted with a view to raising the prestige of the Party and Government.

Related to this technique is the practice of citing excerpts and reproducing interpretations of news and

events as published in foreign newspapers, especially the letters, rallies, demonstrations protesting against the war in Viet Nam, and the compliments for the Viet Minh fighters. This served to demoralize the French troops in Viet Nam as well as the people in France.

10. Incrimination.

From 1945 onwards any Vietnamese who was reluctant to co-operate with the Viet Minh was accused of being "pro-French", cowardly, and Viet gian (traitorous). To eliminate competition, the nationalist parties such as the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach were accused of being pro-Chinese, reactionary, corrupt and traitorous. Many nationalist leaders in the North and in the South were sentenced to death and executed without trial. Those who dared to defend the victims would incriminate themselves and were unlikely to escape from official reprisals.

Facing the two exclusive alternatives, either Viet Minh or Viet gian, just as the good and the evil, many a Vietnamese had to adopt a practical attitude for physical survival. Others, inspired by patriotism, joined the Viet Minh to fulfil their duties to the Fatherland.

This incrimination process was shrewdly included in the Communist policy concerning religion and land reform. A religious believer or a priest was not arrested and sentenced as a believer or a priest, but rather as a "guilty citizen". All landowners were severely punished, not because of their private ownership, but because all landowners were "wicked bullies,

Viet traitors, and cruel exploiters". To condemn and to eliminate these "guilty citizens", "unworthy religious members", "wicked exploiters" was, therefore, a duty of every citizen, a favour to Vietnamese society in general, and to the related Church in particular. Furthermore the incrimination technique also served well the cause of the Communist Viet Minh on the international stage.

From the very beginning of the Viet-French conflicts the Communists were at pains to make clear that the innocent and helpless Vietnamese people did not do any harm to anybody but, being invaded attacked by French troops, they were forced to fight a war of self-defence. Thus the name "Resistance War" was in itself a basic argument in favour of the Vietnamese.

Then, all guilt and guile were attributed to the French side. The "proofs" of rapacity, pillage, lawlessness, cruelty, malice, depravity, wickedness and satanism were compiled and published for a double effect. On the Vietnamese side, those stories of brutality, destruction, mass killing, religious desecration and satanic crimes promoted a universal hate against the French, spurred their spirit of revenge, and thrust them to the battlefield. On the other side, those incriminating accounts generated disgust, revulsion, moral indignation, deepened the sense of guilt among the French people, promoted an increasing protest movement, and finally demoralized the French people and Government.

Besides, this technique gave rise to anger among other peoples in the world and induced many personalities and Governments throughout the world to join the Soviet Union and Communist China in the public condemnation of the French Government. It also contributed to the reluctance and refusal of the American Government to commit American forces to aid the French at the critical moment of Dien Bien Phu.

Ironically, the same technique of propaganda seems to have been responsible for the hostile attitude of the French public towards America during the Viet Nam War in the 1960's, and finally for the general demoralizing of the American people after the alleged Mỹ-lai massacre.

Footnotes for Chapter VIII.

1. For more details, see the author's paper, Ho Chi Minh and the Confucian concept of Chính Danh, presented at the Seminar on Vietnamese Studies (Centre of South East Asian Studies, S.O.A.S., London. January - March 1972).
2. Ho Chi Minh, Appeal to fight the famine, Những lời kêu gọi, (Hanoi: second edition, 1958), Vol.I, p.39.
3. Dân Chủ, No.37, 6 October 1945.
4. Dân Quốc, No.81, 8 December 1945.
5. "Our national hero", a poem of Vũ Thịnh, published in the semi-official newspaper Cứu Quốc (No.130, 31 December 1945).
6. See, for example X.Y.Z, Sửa đổi lối làm việc, p.59.
7. Công tác quần chúng, tập.I (a lithographed study document for Communist cadres), pp.7-8.
8. Ibid, pp.10-12.
9. Directive from the Central Office of Propaganda in Ha Dong, No.6, v..
10. Directive from the Party Central Committee, No.III, p.5. *Italics added.*
11. Directive from the Central Office of Propaganda in Ha Dong, No.8, b.
12. X.Y.Z. (Ho Chi Minh), Sửa đổi lối làm việc (Hanoi: 1957 reprint), p.84.
13. Ibid., p.62.
14. Ibid., pp. 68-84.

15. H.V. Stalin, The Foundations of Leninism (Peking: edition 1970), pp.118-120).
16. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol.IV, p.176.
17. This flagrant case of falsification was discovered by this author when comparing the translation of an article written by Osip Mandel'shtam with his Russian original text. Mandel'shtam recorded Nguyen Ai Quoc's statement that he was 19 years old when he left Viet Nam the first time (i.e., in 1911). The editors of Hoc Tap, however, changed the figure 19 to 21 in order to be consistent with their claim that Ho Chi Minh, alias Nguyen Ai Quoc, was born in 1890 (See Hoc Tap, No.174, June 1970). In 1945, however, the Viet Minh paper Dan Chu (No.4, 28 August 1945) reported unambiguously that Nguyen Ai Quoc was born in 1892.

Conclusion

Through the centuries, the Vietnamese have suffered invasion, political oppression, and social ills. The history of Viet Nam records long periods of harsh sufferings followed by glorious victories won by the extraordinary efforts of the whole nation when united under the strong leadership of inspired heroes. These great victories, on the one hand, constitute the most cherished part of Viet Nam's national heritage, and serve as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the entire people. On the other hand, the common longing for independence and suffering borne together produce a social cement to unite the Vietnamese people, whenever a national crisis confronts them. Consequently their well developed national consciousness has always been reinforced by a deep resentment against foreigners imposing alien rule by superior military might, - the Chinese in early times, the French and the Japanese in modern times. Any threat, real or imaginary, to national sovereignty invariably intensifies Vietnamese fighting spirit and renders the people more ready to sacrifice their private interests for the larger national cause.

In the true tradition of Viet Nam's "indomitable spirit", political groups in the first part of the twentieth century, successively organised audacious uprisings to end the French rule. Their efforts, however, were repeatedly thwarted.

The Indochinese Communist Party, in its precocious infancy, also attempted violent insurrections to over-

throw both "imperialism and colonialism", i.e., the old royal regime and the French rule, but encountered a decade of disastrous failures ranging from the 1930 Nghe Tinh Soviet to the 1940 Cochinchina Insurrection. Throughout the period the Communists overtly advocated proletarianism and internationalism.

Learning from their setbacks, the Communists adopted an entirely different approach which used political persuasion, rather than revolutionary violence.

During the Second World War, the Communists, together with other Vietnamese political parties in Southern China pledged co-operation with the Chinese Nationalists and the Allied Nations against the Japanese, who had gradually replaced the French in Viet Nam. Commissioned to organise anti-Japanese guerilla activities in Viet Nam, they chose at the same time to propagate their revolutionary cause in the name of the United League for the Independence of Viet Nam or the Viet Minh League. Concealing both their political allegiance and their ideological aims, the Viet Minh Leaders raised the banner of Doc Lap (Independence), stressed the just cause of Tu do (Freedom), and promised Hanh phuc (Happiness) to all the Vietnamese. Their persuasive appeal to join the national united front of Viet Minh in its patriotic struggle for Cuu Quoc (Saving the Country), received a spontaneous and enthusiastic response from the Vietnamese people, whose resentment against the French and the Japanese was further deepened by famine and suffering.

In august 1945, when the Japanese were defeated by the Allied forces and the Royal Government in Hue had become confused and paralyzed, the resourceful Viet Minh Leaders called for a general insurrection and engineered a successful power-seizure before the arrival of the Allied forces. They immediately established in Hanoi a Provisional Government headed by Ho Chi Minh whom they introduced as a great national Leader.

After securing the abdication of Bao Dai, and proclaiming the Independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Ho and his thoroughly trained cadres set out to consolidate their newly acquired power. Skillfully combining flexibility, and a highly developed sense of timing, they appealed for national unity and active participation in national affairs, applied their alliance policy to attract all social strata, political and religious elements into various Cuu Quoc organisations which all claimed to work for the realisation of Doc-Lap, Tu-do, Hanh-phuc. Subsequently by implementing their adroit political plans which embodied a general election, a national assembly, a coalition government, and a "democratic constitution", they successfully conferred official status on a new "Democratic Government" of national unity which was, in fact, dominated by it's Viet Minh members.

When faced with competition from other nationalist political parties, the opposition of Chinese Nationalist forces and the French Government, the Viet Minh Leaders shrewdly defused the highly charged situation by means

of their tactical policy of Hoa de tien (conciliation for future advance). On the one hand, the Indo-chinese Communist Party declared its own dissolution, and the Ho Chi Minh Government offered political concessions to the Viet Quoc and Viet Cach Parties, - only to eliminate them later, after the departure of their Chinese Nationalist Protectors. On the other hand, while striving to reach an accommodation with the Chinese Nationalist Forces, the Hanoi leaders adopted a flexible attitude towards France, despite the violent Viet-French conflicts in the South.

When China agreed to permit the French Forces to replace hers in Viet Nam (North of the 16th Parallel), Ho Chi Minh signed the Viet-French Preliminary Agreements (6 March 1946) which paved the way for the Fontainebleau negotiations and President Ho's visit to France, events which they hoped would be generally interpreted as a de facto recognition of the Hanoi Democratic Government. After the official negotiations had failed, Ho Chi Minh, showing a very high degree of self-control, signed a compromising Modus Vivendi with Moutet, the Minister of French Colonies. This unorthodox and flexible gesture later proved to be a prudent diplomatic move which won for the Viet Minh the time necessary for political consolidation and military preparation.

When the Viet-French military conflicts in the South were spread to the North, convincing the Viet Minh leaders that the French Government was resolutely determined to reoccupy Viet Nam, they executed a volte-face and withdrew to the jungle to wage a guerilla war

against the French.

Determined to obtain the full participation of a united nation in the building of a "People's Army" to fight a "People's War" to the end, the undeclared Communists conducted a relentless campaign of Khang Chien, Kien Quoc, (National Resistance and National Building). The first part of this multi-aspect campaign consisted of the five axioms of Resistance, to be inculcated into the mind of every Vietnamese citizen: the Resistance War is a just cause and must be waged by the whole nation, in all fields and activities; it demands total sacrifice over a long period but it will win. The ubiquitous network of agit-prop employed all available devices to instill into the people a lofty ideal to fight for, an unshakeable faith in final victory, and a greater confidence in the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh Government. The Army, the Regional forces or Guerillas, and the Militia were exhorted to concentrate all their efforts and sacrifices on winning the war at all costs. During the same period, the Viet Minh merged with the Lien Viet, another national united front, to promote an elaborate programme of Kien Quoc which left no stone unturned to pave the road toward a socialist regime, euphamistically introduced as "people's democracy!"

Benefitting from the experience, the support, and the all important victory (1949) of the Chinese Communist Party, the Vietnamese Communists cautiously prepared to make their clandestine Party, public once more, under the ambiguous name of Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam,

(the Viet Nam Workers' Party). The re-emergence of the Party carried out under the pretext of strengthening national leadership and, consolidating the people's government, was so timed as to coincide with preparations for a total offensive against the French. The Communist aim was to credit the Party with achieving the final victory it was hoped the offensive would win and restoring peace to the nation.

Thus in 1954, after the sensational battle of Dien bien phu in which hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese were sacrificed for a national ideal, when Hoa-binh (Peace) so much desired by people throughout the world, was re-established, the regime of Dan-chu Nhan-dan (people's democracy) already stood on firm foundations. Empowered by the Geneva accords to rule over half the country, the Vietnamese Communists proudly set out to consolidate the North and to make it a powerful socialist base which would assist the South in its achievement at the same two-stage revolution.

Thus, the story of Viet Minh begins with patriotism and national independence, winds its way through a long war of national resistance, and ends in socialism-communism. If the period 1930-1940 was a decade of failure for the Indochinese Communist Party, the following decade from 1941 (official birth date of the Viet Minh) to 1951 (official appearance of the Lao Dong Party) represented a phase of rapid Communist growth leading to the spectacular success of the Party in 1954.

The essential element which made possible this great achievement, was the immense strength of a united people, completely devoted to a national cause, and willing to sacrifice everything for final victory. This itself was created by the arduous work of political persuasion which the Viet Minh leaders carried out with such great skill, cunning, and perseverance.

Since national power had to be seized before any Communist plan became feasible, the basic adroitness of the Viet Minh resided in the concealment of Communism and the emphasis of nationalism. They combined opportunity and flexibility so as to make "more friends and less foes", and methodically employed efficient techniques to win hearts and minds.

Firstly, the Viet Minh agit-prop used every possible means to stress the revolutionary ideal, which itself had been designed to reflect the deep aspirations and the prevailing needs of the Vietnamese, and to portray it as a just cause. To stimulate enthusiasm and total dedication in the people, the propagandist recalled the memories of common suffering and national glory throughout history, holding up the shining examples of Viet Nam's most revered heroes. Then, the noble ideals of Independence, Freedom, and Happiness were expounded in simple and clear terms, which evoked familiar traditional images and recalled the well-known Confucian ethics. When this conditioning process had been completed, and the people had been subjected to the technique of, for example, isolation and guided

rumours, only then was the revolutionary message presented. It was introduced most discretely, with careful selection of issues and arguments so that these accorded with local characteristics and the personal interests of the people.

Such a message, well adapted to the motivational and emotional characters of the target group, ascertained by meticulous investigations and methodical study, proved irresistably persuasive. It was planned and delivered by a core of cadres thoroughly trained in the revolutionary ethics and work-style, whose principal characteristics were determination, dedication, and discipline. Their inspiring way of life which was continually improved by criticism, self-criticism, and patriotic emulation, made their work of persuasion even more attractive and convincing.

Furthermore, the whole Communist programme of political persuasion, faithfully implemented by convinced followers, owes its immense effectiveness to the superb leadership of Ho Chi Minh, a persuader par excellence, who possessed the rare combination of iron-will and flexibility.

BÀI CA PHỤC-QUỐC

(Đăng trong báo Phục-Quốc ở Hải ngoại gửi về)

Trông cổ quốc lòng đau khổ xiết.
 Sáu mươi năm Nam - Việt lầm than,
 Thương thay nước mất nhà tan,
 Dưới sông máu chảy, trên ngàn xương phơi.
 Thảm nê-lô làm tôi tớ Pháp,
 Một bao giờ cho thoát cơ hèn.
 Thân ơi ! Hỡi Việt giang san,
 Người nhiều đất rộng kho tàng sạch không.
 Dân lao khổ đời hèn, rất tối,
 Thuế nặng nề, lại đời quan tham
 Cường quyền qua thời giờ mau
 Bạc vàng vơ vét mình làm chúng xoi,
 Đồng bào hỡi ! Hãy thời đồng dậy.
 Tuốt gươm ra, đời lấy san hà,
 Ghém giết giặc, dẹp cơ cớ.
 Tự cường tự trị, phòng chủ cậy ai ?
 Thương quý nhau mới mới sung sướng
 Quyết một lòng thờ phụng quốc gia.
 Nước non vẫn nước non nhà,
 Giang san Đông Lạc vẫn là giang san.
 Để bất nghĩa, luôn dẹp bán nước.
 Người chí cao, vẫn ước phục thù
 Gươm thay cho đũa thất phu.
 Làm trai chẳng biết phục thù nước non.
 Nước cũ mất dân còn khá tiếc
 Nhà cũ tan, phải khổ trả thù
 Anh hùng nghĩa sĩ đánh tham
 Sử xanh ghi chép, sửa hèn phụng thờ.
 Trần-hưng-Đạo chùa xưa giết giặc
 An-Trung, Nhị quân Bắc cũng gồm,
 Lê Vương khởi nghĩa Lam-Son,
 Xông lên đốt pháo, dồn cơ nước non.
 Quốc dân hỡi ! thêm ta phải liệu,
 Gõ học hành, kiếm ruộng, ra chèo,
 Thuộc phiên thuế ấy mới ghê.
 Không được thuế để mở hại người,
 Tỉnh giấc đây, kéo dài ngàn ngủi,
 Cứ bước lên, kéo tũi Tiên Rồng:
 Đồng tâm hiệp lực thành công.
 Thương nhân phải nhớ neo sông núi Vàng

Trai anh hùng phơi gan chiến địa,
 Gai trượng-triêu kết nghĩa tạo khang,
 Chàng mau giết giặc tham tàn,
 Đuổi xa bờ cõi xua xang biển thùy,
 Dựng địa chủ đương này Châu A,
 Xem g-dô và cả trời Nam.
 Cuộc đời mở hội doanh hoàn,
 Với Nam dân quốc giang san thái bình,
 Lòng lấy tiếng dân vinh quốc thái!
 Xem máu đào đời lại phân minh,
 Mấy nhời nhân hậu dính dính,
 Làm người phải biết nhục vinh ở đời.
 Quốc dân hỡi nay thời đã đến,
 Xem sáng động, cùng kiếm trở ra.
 Chỉ giới thù với san hà!
 Quyết lòng nợ nước, trả nhà trả nợ.
 Quân tàn bạo còn đông chi nữa,
 Mà «đồ hồ» với tựa ở người.
 Nào ai sót giống, thương nòi
 Đồng tâm nẹp súng ta đời giang san,
 Dựng Độc-lập vô vang biết mấy,
 Gai A-dông vững vững Việt-Nam.
 Chết cho đa Trưng ở Vàng,
 Máu nhân dân đổ máu và máu xa.
 Vua Xiêm, Nhật, Trung-hoa trước mắt,
 Trai anh hùng chiến đấu Tây phương
 Hai giống mấy nước hàng cường.
 Dựng chủ nghĩa khỏi khỏi đường lao lung.
 Đồng bào hỡi, thử trông cho xiết,
 Ma Lỗ-Kha còn biết phục thù.
 Siri (Syrio) địa chẳng phải nợ.
 Quân hỡi ai là tổ để bị nước non.
 Người như thế, ta còn gọi mãi.
 Tổ giống là thống hai là thương.
 Anh hùng hỡi biết bốn phương,
 Chàng hỡi là quyết mở đường can qua
 Cho có sự sống ta yếu mạnh
 Đi có người Gách-mạnh giúp công.
 Gai chủ nội ứng là xong
 Anh em xung đột, sáng động ngoài cho
 Đồng bào ta chờ chờ cũng đợi
 Dắt đưa như bước tới vấn minh
 Xa rồi bầy tổ chút tình
 Chúc cho Nam Việt luôn vinh đời đời.

NGUYỄN CÂN-KHON

BaoPhu-quốc Septembre 1926

BÀI CA PHẢN ĐỀ

Cảnh vũ trụ sao đời vật đổi,
 Trò tang thương lở núi mòn non
 Trời cao mây hợp, mây tan.
 Quốc gia lớp lớp suy tàn, phúc hưng
 Kể từ lúc vua Hùng thống trị
 Bốn nghìn năm có lẽ đã qua
 Mấy phen nghiêng ngửa sơn hà
 Mấy phen lại phất ngọn cờ tự do.
 Thái-hà ấp xương Ngô chặt đất
 Bạch-đăng-giang máu giặc đầm sông
 Biên Hồ còn bóng bà Trưng
 Sơn khê dấu ngựa Quang Trung còn đây.
 Tên Nguyễn Ánh mặt đầy mây dạn
 Công răn về để cấn gà nhà.
 Tưởng niềm thất quốc vong gia
 Ai mà chẳng xót ai mà chẳng cay
 Dân ta kể từ ngày mất nước
 Tiền thuế sưu để quốc tằng gia
 Thuế người, thuế chợ, thuế đồ
 Thuế cầu cống, thuế trâu bò, ruộng nương.
 Gõ muốn dẫn trên rừng phải thuế
 Muối muốn moi dưới bể phải tiền
 Công nhiên dung túng a-phiền (1)
 Thuốc lá, rượu, giữ độc quyền bán buôn
 Trong nhà máy hàng muôn ngàn thợ
 Làm ngày đêm chẳng đủ cơm ăn
 Nơi nơi vang tiếng than thân
 Kiếp trâu có lẽ còn hơn kiếp người
 Thăng tư bản nắm dài hưởng lộc
 Chẳng làm gì mà bạc đầy kho
 Ngủ nhà lầu, diện ô-tô
 Nay Tam-đảo nghỉ, mai Đồ-sơn chơi
 Kẻ làm ruộng suốt đời vất vả
 Da cháy đen trán rã mồ hôi
 Chủ điền mấy đừa ngồi rồi
 Nực thời quạt điện, rét thời chăn chiên
 Trên rừng núi mấy miền nước độc
 Hàng nghìn phu khó nhọc khai hoang
 Tai ù, bụng ồng, da vàng
 Mà tay trắng vẫn lại hoàn trắng tay

Riêng béo mấy thằng Tây tư bản
 Chỉ ăn không mà vẫn giàu sang
 Chủ thời nhân hạ vênh vang
 Phu thời bỏ xác trên non dưới ngòi
 Bình lính cũng sống đời cơ cực
 Trại và đồn như ngục giam tù
 Cúi đầu vâng lệnh kẻ thù
 Nó sai nó khiến, nó trù, nó khinh
 Bắt xa cách gia đình làng mạc
 Cấm không cho yêu nước thương nơi
 Hai phe để quốc tranh mời
 Bắt mình thế mạng giữa nơi chiến trường
 Kể sao xiết nuôn đường khổ nhục,
 Tiếng kêu ca oán khóc vang lừng
 Ai nghe, lửa giận chẳng bùng
 Ai nghe máu nóng không sùng sục sôi
 Vụ Yên-bái mới hồi năm nọ
 Cuộc Thái-nguyên chuyện cũ vừa qua
 Tấm gương phục quốc chưa nhòa
 Tiếng hô phản đế bây giờ còn vang
 Nay Pháp quốc hoàn toàn tiêu diệt
 Bọn thực dân cuốn hết vuốt nanh
 Lão già dè mặt Pê-tanh.
 Đầu hàng phát xít ở thành Vi-si
 Đờ-cu thấy thế nguy sức yếu
 Dâng Đồng-dương lên biểu Nhật Hoàng.
 Nước ta như món đồ hàng
 Dừa mua dừa bán coi thường coi khinh
 Có mấy kẻ cầu vinh trục lợi
 Quen thói thường uốn gối khom lưng
 Chúng khoe quân Nhật oai hùng
 Chúng khen người Nhật có lòng «Tứ bi»
 Tên Cường-đề một bè nô lệ
 Chúng đồn là thánh đế minh vương
 Nhật kia vốn giống hung tàn
 Chỉ quen vợ Việt chứ thương gì mình
 Gương Cao-ly rành rành ra đó
 Dân tộc Hàn khốn khổ xót xa
 Lại xem như nước Trung-hoa
 Dân bà chúng hiếp, cửa nhà chúng thiêu
 Sưu thuế sẽ thêm nhiều thêm nặng
 Một khi mà chúng đóng ở ta
 Chúng cùng để quốc lang sa
 Cũng phường chó sói mặt già như nhau

Ta đầu lể cúi đầu khuất phục
 Làm ngựa trâu đeo nhục mãi ru!
 Không! không! nòi giống Âu-cơ
 Nghìn năm tranh đấu đến nay không mờ
 Đảng Cộng sản nêu cờ phục quốc
 Kêu gọi ai yêu nước thương nòi
 Nào ai khinh kiếp tôi đòi
 Nào ai muốn sống cuộc đời tự do
 Mau đứng dưới ngọn cờ phản đế
 Nghìn tay giờ như thể một tay
 Đuổi thẳng Nhật, diệt thẳng Tây
 Tham quan bạo chúa ra tay tiêu trừ
 Bao nhà máy quân thù thu lấy
 Đem giao cho hết thầy thợ thuyền
 Rừng của Tây, đất đồn điền
 Tích thu giao lại toàn quyền nông dân
 Bao thuế má nợ nần xóa hết
 Thuế chỉ thu ở các nhà giàu
 Lập xô viết tự dân bầu
 Công nông giai cấp đứng đầu liên bang
 Các dân tộc ngang hàng tự quyết
 Tay cầm tay kiến thiết tương lai
 Bình quyền gái cũng như trai
 Dứt dây xiềng xích đập đời xiềng gông
 Lập quân đội công nông cách mạng
 Lĩnh như dân được hưởng công quyền
 Được trọng đãi có phần điền
 Không xâm lược chỉ phòng biên nước nhà
 Giờ hiện tại là giờ giải phóng
 Mau đứng lên nòi giống Lạc-long
 Đứng lên theo ngọn cờ hồng
 Dựng xây thế giới đại đồng tương lai.

BÀI CA VIỆT MINH

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Đồng bào hỡi! Nước nhà tan nát,
 Cầm giặc thay Nhật — Pháp hung tàn,
 Kể từ Pháp mất giang san,
 Pê-tanh nhục nhã dầu hàng Hít-le;
 Dân thuộc địa trầm bề đau khổ,
 Bọn Đồ-cu⁽¹⁾ chẳng hổ gươm đao,
 Róc xương, nao lũy đồng bào,
 Hết tang sưu thuế lại đảo lạc quyền.
 Hàng ăn mặc độc quyền chúng bán,
 Kho bạc vàng vô tận chúng vơ,
 Dân ta đã xác như vờ
 Lại thêm đi lính đi phu thâm sâu.
 Trận Pháp — Đức, Tây Âu không khiếp,
 Thân ngựa trâu dân Việt nỡ nung,
 Chống Xiêm, bao kẻ anh hùng
 Làm bia đỡ đạn đau lòng nhau chưa?
 Đối thế thâm không cho than vãn,
 Miệng thương dân khép án tội tù,
 Hỡi ai tranh đấu tự do,
 Kia gươm máy chém, kia mỏ tang thương,
 Kia những vụ dốt làng cướp của,
 Kia những thân nếm bể trôi sông,
 Bắc-sơn bao kẻ đau lòng,
 Nam-kỳ bao cảnh vô cùng điêu linh.
 Ngấm rònng nổi bất bình có một,
 Nhìn giang sơn chưa xót không hai,
 Đồng-dương là đất của ai
 Mà Tây đem một phần mười dâng Xiêm?
 Vòng nô lệ càng thêm nô lệ,
 Đời xót xa càng dễ xót xa,
 Thương nhau thân phận dân ta
 Ném vào giặc Pháp, tung ra giặc lùn!
 Nhà thôn xóm, Tây đồn, Nhật đuổi,

Mả ông cha phải bởi phải đào,
 Ngày ngày nhát kiếm ngọn dao.
 Ai than, ai khóc, ai gào mặc ai.
 Bọn nhi nữ xót dơi trính tiết,
 Quân bạo tàn nói xiết dâm ô.
 Biết bao nương đỗ ruộng ngô
 Đến ngày ăn quả còn lo phá mìn.
 Hàng chợ búa ủa nhau chúng cướp,
 Dân trồng đay nơm nớp roi song,
 Vì dầu bom đạn hải hùng,
 Vì dầu nát thịt tan lòng như chơi?
 Thân ta thế, ời đời ta thế!
 Nghĩ nguồn cơn như xé tâm can,
 Đồng bào hãy đập cho tan,
 Hay đánh nin nhẹn, hay cam tôi dôi?
 Không, không được! Giếng nói Hồng Việt
 Quyết kiên cường không chết bao giờ!
 Trời Nam vốn tự ngày xưa
 Bao phen bão táp ngọn cờ cao bay,
 Vẫn ngạo nghễ những ngày oanh liệt,
 Kia anh hùng hào kiệt oai danh:
 Trưng Vương mở nghiệp Mi-thành
 Trần hưng Đạo phá tan tành quân Nguyên,
 Lê Thái tổ chiến hiền giết giặc,
 Nguyễn quang Trung giúp Bắc bình Nam;
 Từ ngày Pháp kéo quân sang,
 Tiếng hô phản đế vẫn vang sơn hà.
 Súng Vũ-quang truyền qua Bãi Sậy,
 Yên-thế hô gọi dậy Thái-nguyên,
 Kèn Yên-bái thúc quân lên,
 Lá cờ Nghệ Tĩnh còn in máu hồng.
 Theo tiếng gọi non sông tổ quốc
 Dân Bắc-sơn bao lớp tung hoành,
 Nam-kỳ đứng cầm giáo tranh,
 Đô-lương giết giặc cướp thành kia ai.
 Đồng bào hỡi đây lời tâm huyết,
 Đây tiền nhân đã viết cho ta,
 Khuyến ta giữ lấy nước nhà,
 Khuyến ta đứng dậy dựng cờ tự do;
 Không chịu đầu hàng quân ác độc,
 Không chịu làm dân tộc ô danh,

Tuồng chi là giống hời tanh
 Kê ôm Tây trắng người tranh Nhật vàng.
 Bọn quan Pháp giả đường nhân nghĩa
 Khuyên đồng bào chia sẻ bát cơm,
 Bầy thân Nhật, ấy con buôn
 Giả danh Cách mạng, dựa hồn Quốc gia.
 Vì tư lợi vinh hoa phú quý,
 Muốn dân ta nô lệ giam cầm;
 Ấy loài tàn bạo lương tâm,
 Tên trong quốc tịch ngàn năm xóa rồi.
 Nghe theo chúng những lời đường mật
 Là mắc mưu giặc Nhật, giặc Tây,
 Là đem dâng nước non này
 Cho quân hổ đói, cho bầy sói lang;
 Là cam chịu đầu hàng khốn nạn,
 Là đem thân tự hiến quân thù;
 Đồng bào hỡi! trước nguy cơ
 Nhà tan nước mất bấy giờ hỡi ai?
 Đương cứu nước cứu non duy nhất
 Cờ Việt Minh đã phát trên đầu,
 Cùng nhau ta nắm tay nhau
 Không phân tôn giáo, nghèo giàu, gái trai.
 Nào thiên hạ ai người nghĩa khí,
 Nào nhân dân ai kẻ anh tài,
 Nào đoàn, nào hội những ai,
 Những ai yêu nước, ai người Việt-nam?
 Những ai muốn đánh tan giặc Pháp,
 Những ai mong cứu thoát giống nòi,
 Việt Minh tha thiết chào mời
 Mau vào Mặt trận diệt loài xâm lăng,
 Các đoàn thể Việt-nam cứu quốc
 Đang ra tay đón rước ân cần,
 Thợ thuyền, binh lính, nông dân,
 Thanh niên, phụ nữ, văn nhân, nhi đồng,
 Các phụ lão, phò ông, địa chủ,
 Bạc kỹ hào, điền hộ, thương gia,
 Hỡi hồn dân tộc quốc gia,
 Mau mau tụ tập dưới cờ Việt Minh!
 Mừng, Mán, Thoắt bất bình Pháp Nhật
 Thái, Miên, Lèo cùng đất Đông-dương,

Núi rừng tỏ chí hiên ngang,
Việt Minh nguyện bước lên đường đấu tranh.
 Tàu, Ấn-độ mệnh mỏng dặt nước,
 Diên, Triều-tiên mây lớp non sông,
 Trận tiền hăm hở xung phong,
Việt Minh nguyện kết dải đồng trao nhau.
 Toàn dân tộc Á-châu khổ ải,
Việt Minh đều thân ái nắm tay,
 Những người dù Nhật dù Tây
 Trọng quyền dân chủ mong ngày tự do,
 Coi phát-xít là thù số một,
 Giận tham tàn muốn tuốt gươm ra,
Việt Minh mong ước gần xa
 Cùng dân Nam-việt xông pha chiến trường.
 Đồng bào hỡi, con đường sống mới
 Đầy vinh quang chói lọi tương lai,
 Liên-xô anh dũng tuyệt vời
 Hồng quân đang kết liễu đời Hit-le;
 Quân Anh Mỹ đang thi nhau tiến,
 Cả dân Tàu đang chuyển thể công,
 Lò than cách mạng dương hồng,
 Gió đưa ngọn lửa bùng bùng lên cao.
 Con cáo Pháp đang gào thảm khấp,
 Lũ sói lùn bao xiết lo âu,
 Hai quân Nhật Pháp đánh nhau,
 Nhật mong đuổi Pháp, Pháp cầu Nhật tan.
 Thanh kiếm nợ nhiều phen đã tuốt,
 Lưỡi lê kia trắng toát bao lần,
 Nhật đang đợi phút tan tành,
 Dem thêm đặc thắng muôn phần cho ta.
 Đồng bào hỡi, thời cơ đã đến!
 Tiến lên mau, quyết tiến lên mau!
 Theo gương tranh đấu năm châu,
 Mọi gan Nhật, Pháp, bêu đầu Việt gian.
 Dưới cờ đỏ sao vàng năm cánh,
 Hỡi đồng bào sát cánh chen vai,
Việt-nam riêng một góc trời
 Xây nền độc lập muôn đời tự do.

APPENDIX B1

Giao lộ máy cho thợ thuyền.
 Trả ruộng đất cho dân cày.
 Giải phóng cho dân bị
 Giải phóng cho các dân tộc nhỏ
 Giải phóng cho Việt Nam
 Giải phóng cho nhân dân

Truyền đơn kỷ niệm Cách mạng tháng Mười, năm 1929.

(Ảnh: Viện bảo tàng cách mạng V.N.)

THE POLITICAL PROGRAMME
OF
THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
IN 1930

NHỮNG KHẨU HIỆU LỚN DẸ RA
TRONG BẢN LUẬN CƯƠNG 1930:

- 1) Đánh đổ đế quốc chủ-nghĩa Pháp, phong kiến và địa chủ.
- 2) Lập chính phủ công, nông.
- 3) Tịch thu hết thảy ruộng đất của bọn địa chủ ngoại quốc, bản xứ và các giáo hội, giao ruộng đất cho trung và bần nông; quyền sở hữu ruộng đất về chính phủ công nông.
- 4) Sung công hết thảy các sản nghiệp lớn của bọn tư bản ngoại quốc.
- 5) Bỏ các thứ thuế hiện thời; lập ra thuế lũy tiến .
- 6) Ngày làm 8 giờ; sửa đổi sự sinh hoạt cho thợ thuyền và quần chúng lao khổ.
- 7) Xứ Đông-dương hoàn toàn độc lập; thừa nhận dân-tộc tự quyết.
- 8) Lập quân đội công, nông.
- 9) Nam nữ bình quyền.
- 10) Ủng hộ Liên-bang xô-viết, liên kết với vô sản giai cấp toàn thế giới và phong trào cách mạng thuộc-địa và bán thuộc địa.

APPENDIX B3

KÊU GỌI ĐẤU TRANH

(Xô-viết Nghệ-Tĩnh 1930-31)

.....
 Lũ nặng xanh mẩy đũa quan trường
 Lấy của ai mà vòng vàng nhân bạc?
 Bọn hào lý dọc ngang ngang dọc,
 Bốp cổ dân đêm thóc lấy tiền,
 Bọn nha môn xiên xỏ xỏ xiên,
 Lừa quần chúng: bạc tiền đâm thủng giấy!
 Giết quân mật thám theo Tây,
 Giết quân phản đảng, giết bầy tham quan.
 Giết những tội thông gông ký lục,
 Cứ theo Tây lúc nhúc từng đàn.
 Giết quân lính trắng ngu dân,
 Vai mang khẩu súng không hàng, phản dân.
 Giết những tội mới ra nhón nhác,
 Đi tuần phòng gác các trong dân.
 Giết bầy hào trưởng văn thân,
 Cứ ngồi cậy thế cậy thần hiếp dân.

Ngạn ngữ phổ biến :

TRÍ, PHÚ, ĐỊA, HÀO, ĐÀO TẬN GỐC, TRƯỚC TẬN RẼ.

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 $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{50} = \frac{1}{100}$

Ngày 28 Tháng 8 năm 1945)

- 1)- Bỏ thuế thân và mọi sưu dịch của Phong kiến và Thực-dân một thứ thuế lợi tức và lũy tiến, để thuế khóa được công bằng hơn.
 - 2) Tịch thu hết những tài sản của bọn Phát-xít và bọn chạy t. Phát-xít trong cuộc chiến tranh, vô luận người da trắng hay da vàng, ngoại quốc hay bản địa.
- Những tài sản ấy sẽ quốc hữu hóa hay phát mại sung công tùy theo tính chất.

3)- Quốc hữu hóa những nhà băng đã cộng tác với quân đội Pháp
xít trong cuộc chiến tranh. Lập một quốc gia ngân hàng. 467.

4)- Mở mang các ngành kỹ nghệ, nhất là kỹ nghệ nặng để cho n
kinh tế quốc gia phát triển một cách mau chóng và độc lập. Khuyến kh
mở mang các kỹ nghệ thủ công.

5)- Chia lại công điền một cách công bằng

6)- Định chế lại địa tô (giảm nhẹ cho nông dân)

7)- Kiến thiết công trình thủy lợi, bồi đắp đê điều đắp công
làm cho nghề nông phát triển.

8)- Chính phủ khuyến khích và giúp đỡ nhân dân khẩn hoang để
tăng thêm diện tích canh tác

9)- Nghiêm cấm cho vay nợ quá nặng lời

10)- Thuế đoan độc lập

11)- Mở mang các đường giao thông vận tải và các hải cảng

12)- Thống nhất dụng cụ cân, đo, lường.

C)- VẤN ĐỀ XÃ HỘI

1)- Thi hành luật lao động ngày làm 8 giờ và các luật lao động
xã hội khác, nhằm bảo đảm đời sống cho giai tầng Lao-động.

2)- Bài trừ nạn thất nghiệp, cương quyết thanh toán nạn nạn

3)- Chính phủ phải giúp đỡ các gia đình đông con

4)- Bảo cô những người tàn tật, phế nhân và tìm cách dạy nghề
cho họ.

5)- Lập thêm nhà thương và nhà hộ sanh; huấn luyện cấp tốc Y
Y-tá, hộ-sanh, dược sĩ.

6)- Thiết lập ấu trĩ viện.

D)- VẤN ĐỀ VĂN HÓA

1)- Bài trừ văn hóa đồi trụy, phản động. Mở mang "Tôn văn hóa
Việt-Nam

2)- Hủy bỏ nền giáo dục nô lệ, thuộc địa, gây dựng nền quốc
giáo dục, dùng Việt ngữ trong các trường các cấp.

3)- Cường bách giáo dục đến bậc sơ học

4)- Thành lập các trường Đại-học chuyên môn cho các Bộ các
ngành, để đào tạo nhân tài, xây dựng đất nước.

5)- Khuyến khích và giúp đỡ các nhà trí thức, các văn nghệ sĩ có phương tiện để phát triển tài năng.

6)- Lập các nhà chiếu bóng, tổ chức sân khấu, câu lạc bộ, để nâng cao sự hiểu biết của nhân dân.

7)- Khuyến khích nền thể dục của quốc dân để tạo điều kiện xây dựng sức khỏe cho nhân dân.

Đ)- ĐỐI VỚI CÁC TẦNG LỚP NHÂN DÂN

1)- **TU-SẢN.**- Được tự do kinh doanh, được chính phủ khuyến khích giúp đỡ trong việc mở mang những kỹ nghệ cần thiết

2)- **ĐỊA CHỦ.**- Quyền sở hữu ruộng đất vẫn được coi trọng, được khuyến khích khai khẩn hoang điền

3)- **THƯƠNG GIA.**- Được tự do thông thương doanh nghiệp, thương mại được pháp luật bảo đảm. Không phải nộp các thứ thuế lặt vặt.

4)- **THỢ THUYỀN.**- Được hưởng luật lao động. Hủy bỏ các thuế lao động mà các chủ xí nghiệp trước đây buộc thợ thuyền phải ký, thiếp là quý hiếm trí cho thợ thuyền. Bãi bỏ chế độ học việc không lương cũ có từ trước.

5)- **NÔNG DÂN.**- Được hưởng thu chính sách "người cày có ruộng" được giảm địa tô. Những năm hạn hán một mùa được cứu tế.

6)- **BINH LÍNH.**- Hậu đãi những binh sĩ có đại công trong bảo Tổ-Quốc. Đặc phụ cấp tăng khoản để bảo đảm đời sống gia đình binh sĩ

7)- **CÔNG-CHỨC.**- Hủy bỏ chế độ công chức của thực dân và phong kiến, thiết lập một qui chế công chức mới trong đó những công chức có tài năng và tinh thần phục vụ cao được hậu đãi.

8)- **HOC SINH.**- Bỏ các khoản học phí, lệ phí thi cử, hạn tuổi vô lý, mở thêm trường học, huấn luyện giáo viên, cấp học bổng xứng đáng cho học sinh nghèo. Kiểm việc làm cho học sinh đã tốt nghiệp.

9)- **PHỤ NỮ.**- Thực hiện chế độ "Nam Nữ bình quyền" và "Gai cày bình đẳng" Đàn bà đàn ông hoàn toàn ngang hàng nhau về mọi mặt: Chính trị, văn-hóa, kinh-tế, Xã-hội. Việc làm ngang nhau, lương bổng ngang nhau (1)

10.- **TRẺ EM.**- Được chính phủ săn sóc đặc biệt về thể dục, trí dục và Đức dục.

11.- **NGƯỜI GIÀ VÀ NGƯỜI TÀI TẬT.**- Được chính phủ chăm nom và cấp dưỡng châu áo./-

APPENDIX C1

The preliminary Franco-Vietnamese Convention of March the 6th 1946

There has been arranged between the aftermentioned high contracting parties : the Government of the French Republic, represented by M. Sainteny delegated by the French High Commissioner regularly mandated by Admiral d'Argenlieu, French High Commissioner, depositary of the powers of the French Republic, on the one hand, and the Vietnamese Government, represented by its president Mr. Ho Chi Minh and the special delegate of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Vuhong Khanh, on the other hand, the following agreement :

1° The French Government recognises the Vietnamese Republic as a free State, having its Government, its parliament, its army and its finances, forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and of the French Union.

As regard the reunion of the three "Kys" the French Government undertakes to ratify the decisions made by the population, consulted by referendum.

2° The Vietnamese Government declares itself ready to welcome the French army in a friendly manner, when, in accordance with the international agreements, it will replace the Chinese troops.

An agreement annexed to the present preliminary convention will fix the modalities according to which the operations of replacement will take place.

3° The hereabove stipulations will be enforced immediately. As soon as the signatures have been exchanged, each of the high contracting parties will take the necessary measures in order to cause all hostilities to stop immediately, to keep the troops in their respective positions and to create the favourable atmosphere necessary to the immediate opening of friendly and frank negotiations.

These negotiations will bear specially on the diplomatic relations of Viet Nam with foreign States, the future status of Indochina and the French economic and cultural interests in Viet Nam.

Either Hanoi, Saigon or Paris can be chosen as the seat of the conference.

Agreement appended

to the preliminary Conference which took place between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Viet-Nam

The high contracting parties mentioned in the preliminary Convention have made the following agreement :

1° The relief troops will be composed of :

a) 10,000 Vietnamese with their Vietnamese officers, responsible before the vietnamese military authorities ;

b) 15,000 French, including the French Forces stationed at the present moment in Vietnamese Territory North of the 16th parallel. The said elements must be composed only of Frenchmen of metropolitan origin with the exception of the troops entrusted with the guard of the Japanese prisoners.

The whole of these forces will be put under the French High Command assisted by Vietnamese delegates. The progression, the settlement and the use of these forces will be defined at a general staff conference between the representatives of the French command and the Vietnamese command, which will take place as soon as the French units have landed.

Joint commissions will be created in all the ranks in order to ensure, in a spirit of friendly collaboration, the liaison between the French and vietnamese troops.

2° The French elements of the relief forces will be divided into three parts:

a) The units entrusted with the guard of the Japanese prisoners of war : these units will be repatriated as soon as their mission is no longer necessary owing to the evacuation of the Japanese prisoners, and, in any case, within a maximum period of ten months.

b) The units entrusted, in collaboration with the Vietnamese army with the keeping of public order and security in the Vietnamese territory. One fifth of these units will be relieved each year by the Vietnamese army ; this change will, therefore, be completely carried out within a period of five years.

c) The units entrusted with the defence of the Vietnamese bases will hold their garrisons, strictly limited zones of billeting will be assigned to them.

3° The French Government undertakes not to use Japanese prisoners for military purposes.

Hanoi, 6th March 1946.

Signed : *Sainteny, Salan, Vo Nguyen Giap.*

APPENDIX C2**The Franco-Vietnamese modus vivendi****signed in Paris, September the 14th 1946***Article 1*

The Vietnamese citizens in France, and the French citizens in Viet Nam will enjoy the same liberty of establishment as the natives of the country, as well as liberty of opinion, of teaching, of trading and of traffic and, in general, all democratic liberties.

Article 2

French property and enterprises in Viet-Nam will not be subjected to a more severe regime than that reserved to the property and enterprises of vietnamese citizens especially as regards fiscal regulations and the laws concerning labour. This equality of status will be recognised reciprocally in connection with the property and enterprises of Vietnamese citizens in the territories of the French Union.

The status of French property and enterprises which are in Viet Nam cannot be changed except by joint agreement between the French Republic and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

All French property requisitioned by the Vietnamese Government, of which persons or companies have been deprived by the Vietnamese authorities will be returned to their proprietors and beneficiaries. A joint committee will be formed to determine the modalities of this restitution.

Article 3

In order to resume from now on the cultural relations which France and Viet-Nam are equally eager to develop, French schools of the varied degrees, may function freely in Viet Nam. They will carry out the French official programme. By special agreement, these schools will be granted all the buildings necessary to their administration. They will be opened to Vietnamese pupils.

Scientific research and the opening by French citizens of Scientific Institutions will be authorized on all the Vietnamese territory. The same rights will be granted in France to the vietnamese citizens.

The Pasteur Institute will be restored in all its rights and properties. A joint commission will decide the terms under which the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient will resume its activity.

Article 4

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam will call upon French citizens by preference whenever it needs counsellors, technicians or

experts. The priority right granted to french citizens will only cease when it is impossible for France to supply the staff required.

Article 5

As soon as the present problem of monetary harmonization is solved, only one and the same currency will have legal tender in the territories which are under the authority of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and in the other territories of Indo-China.

This currency is the Indo-Chinese piastre, issued at present by the Bank of Indo-China, pending the creation of a Bank of Issue.

The statute of the Bank will be studied in a joint commission in which all the members of the Federation will be represented. This commission will also have to coordinate the currency and the questions relative to foreign exchanges. The Indo-Chinese piastre will be included in the franc area.

Article 6

Viet Nam will form a Customs Union with the other countries of the Indo-Chinese Federation. In consequence, there will be no inland customs barriers and the same tariffs will be carried out everywhere at the entry and exit of Indo-Chinese territory.

A committee for the coordination of the Customs and foreign trade, which may, besides, be the same as that entrusted with the questions of currency and foreign exchanges, will study the appropriate means of applying and preparing the organization of the Custom Houses in Indo-China.

Article 7

A joint committee for the coordination of communications will study the measures necessary to reestablish and improve the traffic between Viet-Nam and the other countries of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union : land, sea and air transports, postal, telephonic, telegraphic and radio-electric communications.

Article 8

Pending the conclusion between the French Government and the Government of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam of a definite agreement putting in order the question of the diplomatic relations of Viet Nam with Foreign countries, a joint franco-vietnamese commission will determine the provisions to be made to ensure the consular representation of Viet Nam in the neighbouring countries and its relations with the foreign consuls.

Article 9

In order to reestablish as soon as possible in Cochinchine and South Annam the public order which is as necessary to democratic liberties as to the resumption of commercial transactions, and fully aware of the happy repercussions which the suspension of all acts of hostility and violence would have on this point, the French Government and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam have agreed upon the following measures:

- a) All acts of hostility and violence on both sides will be suspended.
- b) Agreements between the French and the Vietnamese High Commands will regulate the conditions of application and control of the measures previously agreed in common.
- c) It is specified that all prisoners presently detained for political reasons will be freed, with the exception of those charged with crimes and breaches of common law.
This will also apply to prisoners taken during the military operations.
- Viet Nam guarantees that no action will be undertaken nor any act of violence tolerated against any person, in consequence of his attachment or his loyalty to France. The French Government guarantees reciprocally that no action will be undertaken nor any act of violence tolerated against any person in consequence of his attachment to Viet Nam.
- d) The exercise of democratic liberties defined by the first article will be reciprocally guaranteed.
- e) All unfriendly propaganda on both sides will be suspended.
- f) The French Government and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam will collaborate so as to make it impossible for all enemy citizens to cause harm.
- g) A personality appointed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and accepted by the French Government will be accredited to the High Commissioner to establish the cooperation necessary for the carrying-out of the present agreements.

Article 10

The Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam agree to study in common the conclusion of special agreements on all the questions which may arise with a view to strengthening their friendly relations and to pave the way for a definite treaty. Negotiations for this purpose will be resumed as soon as possible and no later than January 1947.

Article 11

All the provisions of the present *modus vivendi*, made out in duplicate, will be enforced on October the 30th 1946.

*Paris, fourteenth September, nineteen hundred
and forty six.*

*For the Provisional Government of French
Republic.*

*The French Minister for Overseas Territories
Signed : MARIUS MOUTET.*

*For the Government of the Democratic Republic
of Viet Nam.*

*The President of the Government.
Signed : HO CHI MINH.*

Appended declaration

of the Governments of the French Republic and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam

The Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam are firmly decided to pursue, in a spirit of mutual trust, the policy of agreement and collaboration begun by the preliminary convention of March the 6th 1946 and enforced during the Franco-Vietnamese conferences of Dalat and Fontainebleau.

Convinced that this policy is the only which corresponds to the permanent interests of the two countries and to their democratic traditions, the two Governments consider, while abiding by the convention of the sixth of March 1946 which remains in force, that the time has come to mark further progress in the development of relations between France and Viet Nam, until circumstances permit the conclusion of a total and definite agreement. In a spirit of friendship and of mutual understanding, the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam have signed a *modus vivendi* which, within the frame of limited agreement, brings temporary solutions to the main questions of immediate interest outstanding between France and Viet Nam.

As regards the referendum provided for in the preliminary convention of March the 6th, the two Governments reserve their rights to determine later its date and modalities.

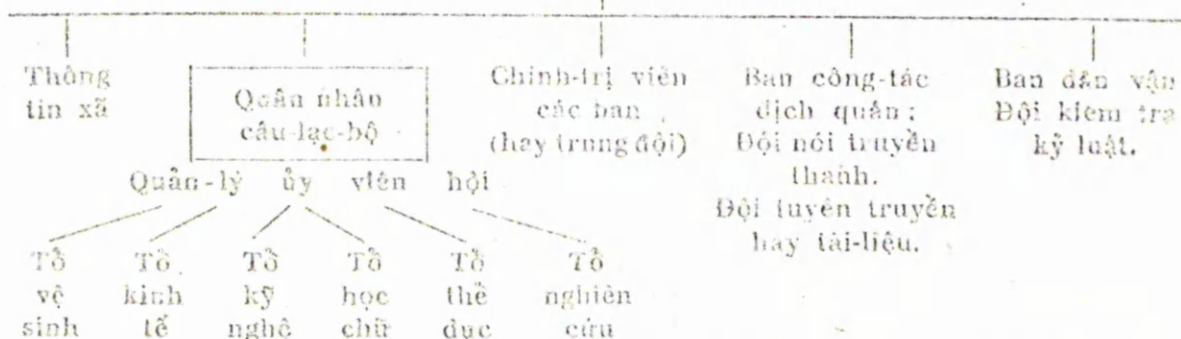
They are convinced that all the measures contained in the *modus vivendi* will contribute to create in the near future a quieter and safer atmosphere which will permit the pursuit of definite negotiations.

Under these circumstances they consider that the work undertaken by the Franco-Vietnamese in Fontainebleau can be resumed in January 1947.

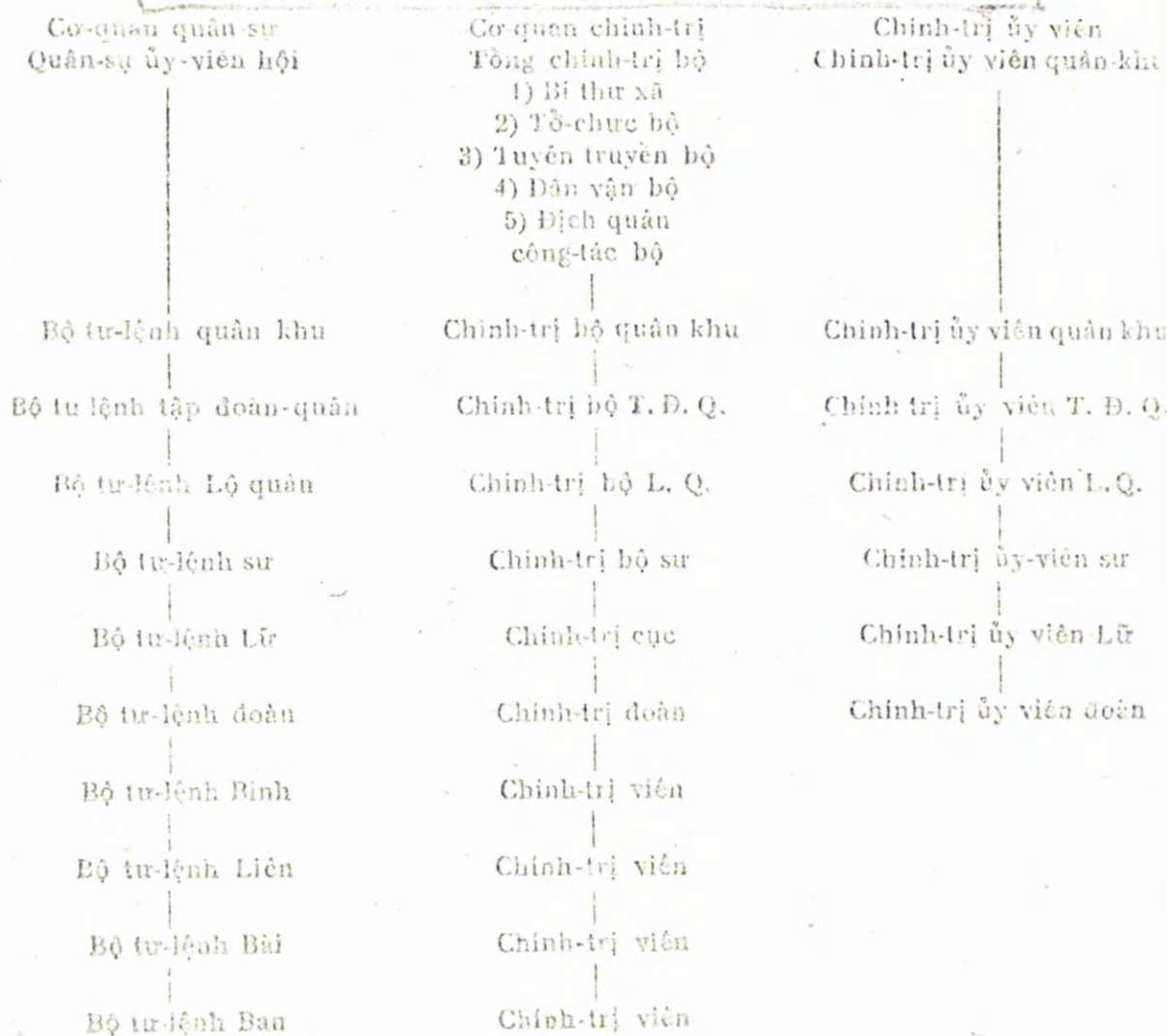
Paris, September the 14th 1946.

APPENDIX D1

Chính-trị viên của liên-đội hay đại-đội



Hệ-thống đầy đủ các cơ-quan chính-trị trong quân chính quy

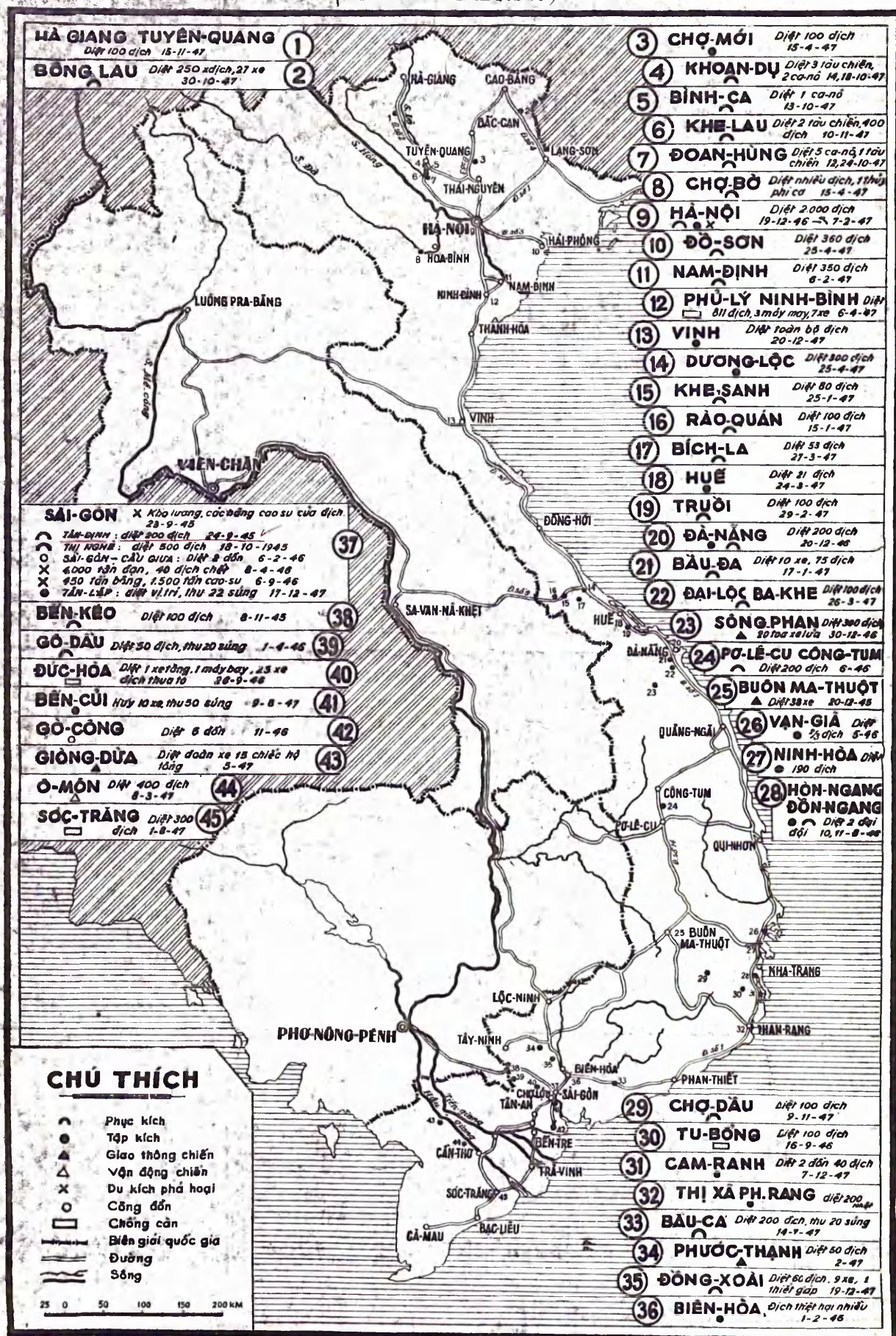


CHÚ GIẢI:

- 1) Hệ-thống cơ quan quân-sự riêng.
- 2) Hệ-thống cơ-quan chính-trị riêng.
- 3) Hệ-thống chính-trị ủy-viên riêng.
- 4) Cơ-quan chính-trị mỗi cấp liên-lạc với bộ tư-lệnh cấp mình và phục tùng cơ-quan chính-trị cấp trên, bộ tư-lệnh cấp trên.
- 5) Bộ tư-lệnh và cơ-quan chính-trị đều phải phục tùng chính-trị ủy-viên đồng cấp.
- 6) Chính-trị ủy-viên mọi cấp phục tùng chính-trị ủy-viên.

NHỮNG TRẬN THẮNG LỚN CỦA QUÂN TA

(23-8-1945 - 12-1947)





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